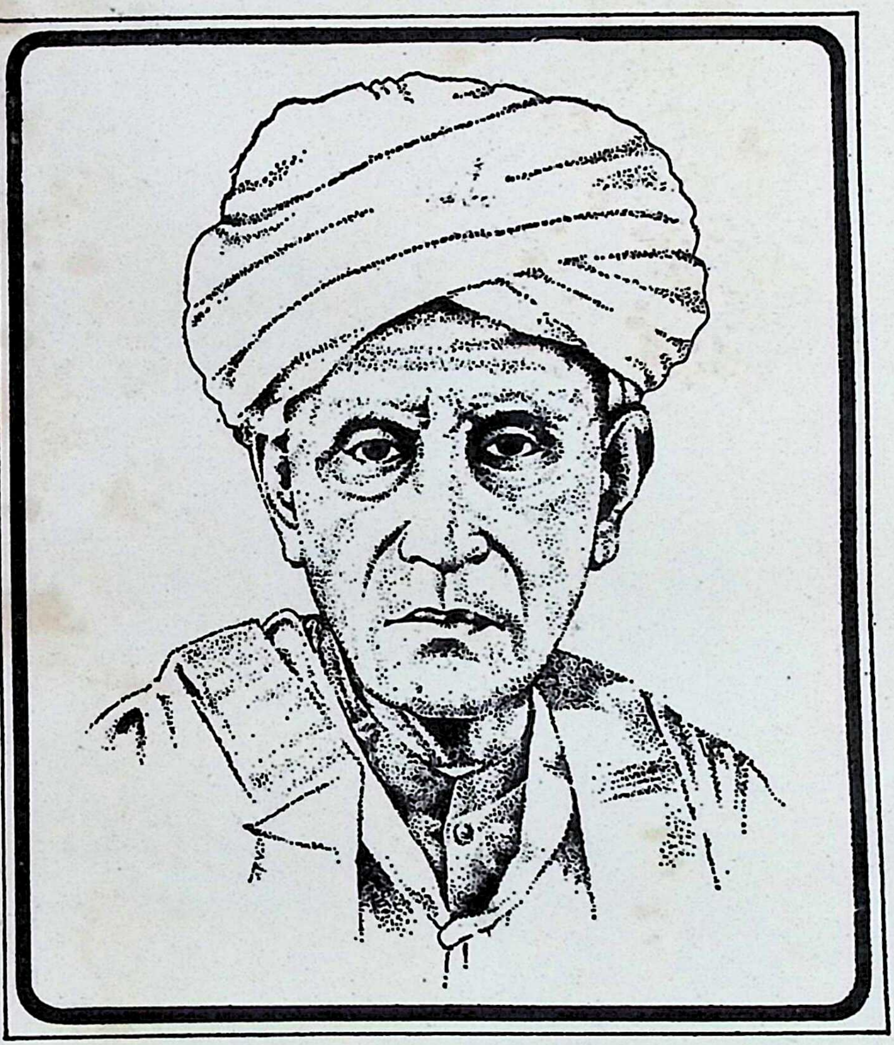
# THE STORY OF MY LIFE

An Autobiography of

# Dr. U. V. SWAMINATHA IYER



ENGLISH VERSION

KAMIL V. ZVELEBIL

U. V. Swaminatha Iyer

# THE STORY OF MY LIFE

*(EṈ CARITTIRAM)*

Part II

Translated from the Tamil original
by

KAMIL V. ZVELEBIL

Editor
Dr. M. Shanmugam Pillai

INSTITUTE OF ASIAN STUDIES
Madras, India
1994.

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First Edition: December 1994, pp. 310

**Price: Rs. 250.00 US $ 35**

Copies can be had from:
Publications Division
**Institute of Asian Studies,**
10th East Street, Thiruvanmiyur,
Madras-600 041. INDIA.
Phone : 416728, 419866

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Printed by Pavai Printers Pvt. Ltd., 142 Jani Jan Khan Road, Madras-600 014 and Published by Dr. Shu Hikosaka and Dr. G. John Samuel, Directors, Institute of Asian Studies, Madras.

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## Chapter 64

# Words of Protection

When my Master passed away, everything in this world looked very uncertain to me. I went home and sat in a corner of the house. I had no will left to do any work. I had no desire to talk to anyone. I took a book composed by Master in his young days—the *Tiyākarāca līlai*—and tried to read it. My mind, however, could not be completely absorbed in it. The memories of Śrī Piḷḷai kept constantly rising, and I felt desperately sad. The book is composed with exquisite imagination that only he was capable of. But as I kept reading it, the intensity of the grief at my Master's parting only increased. Copious tears streamed from my eyes. I did not even feel like eating.

### New Worry

After one o'clock I started for the monastery. Kumāracāmi Tampirāṉ was there in conversation with a few others. All the talk was, of course, only about Śrī Piḷḷai. As soon as I appeared, he said to me, "Of all the people here your grief and loss must be the greatest." I remained silent. "Since Śrī Piḷḷai was here in the Mutt, so many came from elsewhere to study under him! There was always a large crowd of students in the monastery. Now there is no more chance for this. They will all have to return to where they came from. They will visit this place only on special occasions." He continued with a sad mien.

As he talked, a new worry caught hold of me. 'I have so far led a carefree life, always studying with Śrī Piḷḷai and taking down in writing whatever he dictated to me. What am I to do from now on? What claim shall I have on this Mutt hereafter? What will be my position now?' I became despondent and afraid that now that I had lost Śrī Piḷḷai who had been a light to me and my chief support, I shall be forced to roam from place to place without a corner of my own, without any prop to hold on to.

It occurred to me that I should rather go and see Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar than stand here in bewilderment. So I went into the monastery.

He was there in his state-room. On seeing him, the tremendous grief I had till then kept under control burst forth and I wept loudly. Hard as I tried, I could not suppress my violent sobs. Seeing uncontrolable my grief, Tēcikar said, "This kind of grief has no sense! The loss is irreparable. Our heart, too, is full of grief; but we couldn't show it. Of course yours is unbearable. Wasn't his affection for you truly unique?"

### Tēcikar's words of comfort

These words only magnified my grief. I wept even more bitterly. He then spoke to me words of comfort: "There is nothing to be gained by thinking again and again of what had happened, and suffer. Except for the absence of Śrī Piḷḷai, you will lack nothing here. We ourselves shall teach you whatever more you have to study. You may always remain at our side, teaching new students. We shall supply all that you need. Please think of this place as your own. Like the *tampirāṉs* of the Mutt, you will also continue to be an inmate of the Mutt. You won't lack anything."

I knew that those words of protection were not spoken for mere courtesy's sake.

I took leave from him quietly and went back. Although I realized deeply Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar's great affection for me, Kumāracāmi Tampirāṉ's words had upset me. The fact that I grew up enveloped in the love of my Master, gave me no opportunity to recognize the extent of the attachment others had for me. Now, after the passing of Śrī Piḷḷai, Tēcikar's own special affection for me became clearly visible.

### Letters

Everyone who came to the Mutt enquired after Śrī Piḷḷai's death while talking to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. From what he told them, his highest regard for Śrī Piḷḷai was quite obvious. Many came also to talk to me.

According to the instructions of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, the news of Śrī Piḷḷai's demise was announced by means of letters to friends and pertinent persons throughout Tamilnadu. A few of those letters were written by Kumāracāmi Tampirāṉ. Citamparam Piḷḷai wrote quite a few. I too wrote to many persons.

Innumerable answers from sympathisers came back in the form of letters of condolence. Māyūram Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai and many others composed stanzas of mourning. Śrī Makā Vaittiyanātaiyar and his brother Irāmacuvāmi Aiyar wrote, too, letters and poems of condolence.

Thus, even though many wrote moving elegies, it did not occur to me to write one, too. I wouldn't have been able to find suitable words to express my despair. I did not attempt to give a shape to my grief by means of a stanza.

Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar cleared Śrī Piḷḷai's debts, gave his family all the help they needed, and sent them home. Citamparam Piḷḷai went to Māyūram and settled down there with his mother and the others.

I accompanied them, stayed in Māyūram for two days, then returned to Tiruvāvaṭuturai.

While in Māyūram I saw Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai. He was very sad about Śrī Piḷḷai's parting, and praised highly his supreme scholarship.

### Arrival of Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār

A day before Śrī Piḷḷai died, Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār lost his mother. Therefore he did not come to Tiruvāvaṭuturai, he sent simply a letter. Having finished the funeral ceremonies of his mother he came to the Mutt, and saw Tēcikar at once, to mourn Śrī Piḷḷai with him. Seeing how dejected I was, he tried to console me with many kind words.

A new chapter opened in my life. In the place of being a student of Śrī Piḷḷai, I became a student of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and, at the same time, a teacher of a few other students.

## My father and Tēcikar

My father and mother came to live with me in my aunt's house. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar did not know about it. One day, Tiyākarāja Cāstirikaḷ of Putukkōṭṭai met my father, and talking about music, they spent enjoyable time together. They have known each other before. Cāstirikaḷ heard father sing Kaṉam Kiruṣṇaiyar's musical compositions and admired greatly their structure.

When afterwards Tiyākarāja Cāstirikaḷ went to the Mutt, he mentioned in the course of his conversation with Tēcikar my father's Śiva bhakti; the excellence of his *Śiva pujai*, and praised his knowledge of music. As Tēcikar had so far been ignorant of all this, he exclaimed, "Is that so? We had no idea at all! Even Cāminātaiyar hasn't told me." He glanced in my direction as he said so. He then addressed me: "Your musical talent must have been inherited from your own father."

"Yes."

"How is it you have not yet so far taken him here? Has he not visited this place before?"

"He has been here a few times. I did not wish to give unnecessary trouble to His Holiness."

"Trouble? Don't you know how we delight in meeting persons of this sort?"

That afternoon father went to the Mutt, and had a long talk with Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. Since then, they saw each other often, and had friendly talk. Because of this my father grew to admire Tēcikar's generosity, the keenness of his intellect, his liberality, and the high regard he had for scholars and artists. Whenever a musician arrived at the Mutt to sing, Tēcikar would send for father to be present and listen.

Tēcikar would walk every morning to the Kāvēri, have a bath, go to the temple, have a darshan of the Lord, and return to the Mutt. My father too would get up early, walk to the river to take his bath, and perform the *japa* recitation of his morning prayers. He and Tēcikar would set out at the same hour. So, my father would walk with Tēcikar as far as the temple, then take leave and return home. It was Tēcikar's custom every evening to go to the temple to be present at the second evening service. Father would come to the Mutt, accompany Tēcikar to the temple, bring Tēcikar back to the monastery, and return home. Because of all this, a true friendship developed between Tēcikar and my father.

One of the reasons why father was so happy about his stay in Tiruvāvaṭuturai was the fact that there was always available plenty of flowers and leaves for his

*Śiva pūjai*, and that there was never a dearth of any other conveniences. Realizing the rare qualities of Tēcikar, he was full of joy and said, "I have never before come across a place like this, or persons of his sort."

# Chapter 65

## Lessons given by Tēcikar

In the month of *Māci* arrived the hallowed time of the festival of Mahāśivarātrī. At that time, my father would perform *abhiṣeka* worship at all the four night-watches. I went to Tēcikar in order to obtain from the Mutt the necessary coconuts for his *pūjais*. It was the custom that, for the *pūjais* in their houses, the towns people would get various paraphernalia like fresh and ripe coconuts, cloth, sandal-wood etc., from the Mutt. As there were no shops in the town, they had no other place to go and could not buy these things.

### Events at Śivarātrī

When I appeared before Tēcikar, he was engaged in some discussion with Tiyākarāja Cāstirikaḷ. I could not gather the courage to ask for the things which I came to collect, and so I stood there speechless, but Tēcikar at once guessed that I had come to ask for something and said, "What is the matter? Do you need something?" I informed him that I came to pick up young and ripe coconuts for my father's *pūjai*.

Saying "Is that so?", Tēcikar called the *Oṭukkat Tampirāṉ* and ordered him to bring the coconut and the Vināyakar which had been offered separately each on the previous day. The monk did exactly as told. Tēcikar told me, pointing at the objects, "You can use these."

I looked at them and was amazed thinking, "We need many coconuts. There's only one here. And we have not asked for the idol of Vināyakar. There is an icon of Vināyakar in father's *pūjai* already! There is not even a place to install such a large Piḷḷaiyār!"

At that, Tēcikar said, "What do you think? Just take the nut and shake it! You will know whether it is tender or ripe".

I shook it and felt there is juice inside. "There is juice, but no kernel", I said.

"Have they stripped off the fibre well?" asked Tēcikar smiling.

"It's stripped off perfectly well", said I. At that moment Tēcikar said to Tiyākarāja Cāstirikaḷ who was sitting nearby, "Only yesterday we bought this Piḷḷaiyār for twenty rupees, and this coconut for ten!"

Cāstirikaḷ: "That much!? One *could* pay such an amount for the Piḷḷaiyār—but for a coconut? Are coconuts so scarce now?"

Tēcikar: "Well, we thought we could indeed pay as much. The person we obtained it from is very much attached to us."

Cāstirikaḷ: "If it is so why on earth you say it is the cost of this coconut? Probably Your Holiness gave it to him as a gift or a grant."

Tēcikar: "Oh no, no. We gave it for *this* coconut."

Cāstirikaḷ: "Is this a heavenly coconut? Does it contain rubies? It contains just like other coconuts only juice and kernel."

Tēcikar: "Break it and have a look."

Cāstirikaḷ grabbed the coconut at once and was about to break it open. "Don't!" exclaimed Tēcikar laughing. "Don't do it! I'll explain." And he did: "A peasant who lives in one of the villages attached to the Mutt, growing sugarcane, made this coconut out of coarse sugar, out of jaggery, and brought it to me. Another cane-grower made this idol of Vināyakar out of molasses. I know how to value such gestures: I gave one ten rupees for the coconut, and the other one, twenty for the Vināyakar."

Only then we knew the truth.

We were quite amazed by this story. Tēcikar then told me, "Take these for your father. I'll have the other things, the nuts and so on, sent later."

While I was telling father what had happened, and as I gave him the two precious objects, two baskets arrived with green and ripe coconuts, pieces of coarse sugar and all other things necessary.

Father experienced a joy and a satisfaction never ever felt before; he enjoyed to the full his own performance of the Śivarātrī *pūjai* to his heart's content.

## Tēcikar's orders

Among those who were studying at Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt was a man called Mēlakaram Caṇpakakkuṟṟālak Kavirāyar, and we two moved as brothers and were constantly together. We studied together, we stayed together, and being together became a custom. One day Tēcikar sent for us and said, "You two come to us during the day, and after supper at night, for the study of the works you have yet to take up. And also do jointly study those books you have not yet studied, in your free time, and work hard at it. Also, do teaching, giving lessons to those who have come here to study, according to their preference and ability. Teaching will help to develop your knowledge." Saying thus he made due arrangements for this. He issued similar orders to my colleague Kumāracāmi Tampirāṉ and others. We did exactly as he said.

## Kamparāmāyaṇam

Caṇpakakkuṟṟālak Kavirāyar, myself, and the others stayed in the house where Śrī Piḷḷai had been living before, and we did our study and teaching there. We made an intensive study and research of *Pāratam*, *Pākavatam*, *Tirukkuṟṟālap-*

*purāṇam* and similar epics as well as minor classics of different kind. We had studied *Kamparāmāyaṇam* previously with Śrī Piḷḷai up to a part of the *Ayōttiyā-kāṇṭam*. We felt the urge to complete the study of the epic now. Therefore we went through it twice with the aid of Śrī Piḷḷai's palm-leaf manuscript and other palm-leaf manuscripts available in the Mutt. We noted down in a notebook and on separate sheets the different readings we had come across.

## The study of Naṉṉūl

Under Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar we studied grammatical treatises, Śaiva Siddhānta *śāstras*, and a few literary texts. When we expressed our desire to study the *Naṉṉūl Virutti Urai*, Tēcikar told us. a few things related to it. "The first to comment upon *Naṉṉūl* was Caṅkara Namaccivāyar. It was then critically elaborated by Civañāṉa Muṉivar. He has exploited Sanskrit and Tamil usages in his *Tirāviṭa Mahāpāṣyam* on *Civañāṉapōtam*. In order to make the future generation understand these expressions better, he incorporated them in his *Naṉṉūl Viruttiyurai* along with the data he collected from such texts as *Ilakkaṇakkottu*, *Tolkāppiyac Cūttiravirutti*, *Ilakkaṇaviḷakkac Cūṟāvaḷi* etc. etc. At some places he has abbreviated the original, elsewhere he added, and elsewhere he changed or supplied additional information. "After you'll have studied the *Ilakkaṇakkottu* and the other texts mentioned, you will understand well his *Virutti Urai*." And with these words he showed us a palm-leaf script of the work, amended and corrected by the own hand of Civañāṉa Muṉivar himself. With pleasure and awe we looked at the copy where we could detect deletions, additions and corrections made personally by the great scholar.

According to Tēcikar's instructions we first studied the three treatises including *Ilakkaṇakkottu* mentioned by him, and then only took up the *Naṉṉūl Virutti Urai* for study. There was a palm-leaf script of Caṅkara Namaccivāyar's commentary alone, in the Mutt. We used it, and wherever we found a correction or an addition made by Civañāṉa Muṉivar (according to the copy of his *Virutti Urai*) we made a small sign "Ci" in the copy of the commentary.

## Other grammar books

When we studied the *Yāpparuṅkalak Kārikai* he explained thoroughly the extents even in the introduction of the text. Until then I have heard no one offering such detailed and clear explanation. We also studied the *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram*. When he taught us *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram*, a translation of the Sanskrit *Kāvyācāram*, he would give many illustrations of Sanskrit *culōkams* and explain. We studied the *Aṇiyilakkaṇam* composed by Vicākapperumāḷ Aiyar. That is an adaptation of the Sanskrit *Kuvalayāṉantam*. Tēcikar praised highly its structure and the poems used as illustrations.

While we were studying these books on rhetoric I would take up the figures of speech dealt with in those text, compose new stanzas on Tēcikar using these figures, these rhetoric speech, and show them to Tēcikar. He was pleased, but did not fail to point out and correct my errors.

We were studying ourselves Iḷampūraṇar's commentary on *Tolkāppiyam Eḻuttatikāram*, Cēṉāvaraiyar's commentary on *Collatikāram*, and the *Ilakkaṇaviḷakkam*, and clarified our doubts with him. Tēcikar truly delighted in throwing light on some difficult passages in Cēṉāvaraiyar's gloss. He praised that commentary, "No one could comment on grammatical treatises as he did. It is because of his mastery of Sanskrit that he was able to explain matters arguing convincingly!"

## Akam and Puram

Thus we studied all parts of grammar: phonetics and phonology, morphology, literary convention, prosody and rhetoric. However, we did not study grammars of love-poverty *akam*. While studying the commentary on *Tiruccirrampalakkōvaiyār*,we learnt the *akam* conventions — grammar of love poetry. But we haven't studied any *akam* grammar separately. At that time there were only very few who would make a specific study of it. There was also no study at all of the other great division of the subject *purapporuḷ* of *poruḷilakkaṇam — puram* literary conventions. Although no one studied the grammar of love poetry, they did read the love-poems themselves. But in the case of *puram* poetry, no one was familiar either with the literary texts, or with its grammatical treatises.

While studying *Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai* — we did not understand well the meaning of a few of the verses given as illustrations for the prosodic types. There were matters in them connected with the Jaina religion. Ever since I learnt the text from Viruttācala Reṭṭiyār, my doubts remained unexplained. Ṭēcikar told us: "Śrī Kumarakuruparar had composed a *pirapantam* called *Citamparac Ceyyuṭkōvai* to illustrate by poetry the prosodic details mentioned in the *Kārikai*. "As it is a Śaivite text, you will understand it better. It is very useful to understand the grammar." And he taught us that text.

## Parimēlaḻakar

I then studied under him the *Tirukkuraḷ* with Parimēlaḻakar's commentary. Tēcikar's opinion was that Parimēlaḻakar was unique in composing commentaries on literary works as Cēṉāvaraiyar is in writing glosses on grammatical treatises. "When we read a *kuraḷ* we would think that there is nothing very special about it. But Parimēlaḻakar will show us the true value of it and point out whatever there is special. There is no one who could surpass him in giving the essence, in explaining briefly the essential," thus Tēcikar praised Parimēlaḻakar repeatedly. While listening to his classes on the *kuraḷ* I learned a lot of minute and sensitive points.

## Siddhānta texts

As I also wished to study Śaiva Siddhānta *śāstras*, he first taught me *Civappirakācak Kaṭṭaḷai* and *Tiruvālavāykkaṭṭaḷai*. Subsequently, he taught us the short commentary on *Civañāṉapōtam*, and finally the commentary on *Civañāṉacittiyār* and other texts.

# Chapter 66

# The Visitors of the Mutt

At that time, we were simultaneously students who learned, and, following the command of Tēcikar, we were teachers who coached the *Kuṭṭit Tampirāṉs* and others at the Mutt in Tamil texts.

## My Students

Among the monks who were then my students I would like to remember Cuntaraliṅkam Tampirāṉ, Vicuvaliṅkat Tampirāṉ, Cokkaliṅkat Tampirāṉ, Poṉṉampalat Tampirāṉ, Makāliṅkat Tampiraṉ, Vāṉampāṭi Cuppiramaṇiyat Tampirāṉ, Civakkoḻuntut Tampirāṉ and others.

Among my pupils dressed in white dhoties, the main were Pēraḷam Irāmakiruṣṇa Piḷḷai, Civakiriccaṇmukat Tēvar, Ēmpal Aruṇācalap Pulavar, Cantiracēkaram Piḷḷai, Ēḻāyiram Paṇṇai Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai, one Kōyilūrp Paratēci, Neḷivaṇṇam Cāmuppiḷḷai, Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai Poṉṉucāmi Ceṭṭiyār, and Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai Caṇmukam Piḷḷai. I have split the group into several pairs, and to those two, I always dedicated something between half-an-hour to one hour of teaching. One of those who had then studied with me was Cirañcīvi Çaṇmukam Piḷḷai who had become one of the most influential officials of the Mutt and now, after retirement, lives in the South Street of Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai town. Apart from these regular students, people came from time to time for occasional classes.

Some of those who studied with me were my seniors in age. However, they treated me with the highest respect and much affection; hot one of them would do anything improper, and they all behaved spotlessly.

## Aṇṇāmalai Reṭṭiyār

Ciṉṉikuḷam Aṇṇāmalai Reṭṭiyār, the author of *Kāvaṭiccintu*, came to the Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai Mutt at that time to study Tamil. He was brought by Cēṟṟūr Mīṉāṭcicuntarak Kavirāyar. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar entrusted him to my care. I taught him *Naṉṉūl* and *Māyūrappurāṇam*.' Even in those early days he would compose poetry effortlessly. He would write in fast sequence stanzas embellished with *yamakam*, *maṭakku*, *tiripu*, *cantam* and other rhetorical figures. He was, however, not very enthusiastic about the study of grammar; he took leave of us after a short stay and returned home.

## Father's wish

Father, who was now staying with me, intended to go again to the Uṭaiyārpāḷaiyam area. He did not want to idle away his time at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai without anything to do. As for myself, it was his wish that I would come along. He has not changed his conviction that I should take up the giving of *purāṇic* discourses as my profession and earn my living by it. "If you stay in this place like this, where are we going to live? You're now a married man. Don't you feel the need to raise a family? This is a good place. But does a man live by food alone? How long can we bear to live away from you and go from place to place? I intend to obtain the permission from His Holiness to take you with me as I go." This was what he said to me. I did not say yes or no to what he had suggested. I had no wish to leave Tiruvāvaṭuturai. On the other hand, it was sad to think that I would be separated from my parents. I could not come to any decision.

## Tēcikar's support

In this situation father went one day to see Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and told him that he intended to leave for home and take me along with him. At once Tēcikar said, "Your son must stay with us now. There are more texts which he has yet to study. We ourselves intend to teach him. He is also much needed to teach those boys who come here to study. All that he studied with Śrī Piḷḷai is going to bear full fruit only now. So you alone should now go to your village, collect your belongings, and settle down here permanently. We shall see to it that all your needs are met here. We'll even build a house for you. You can live here happily without any worry, bathing in the Kāvēri and engaging in Śiva *pūjai*."

As Tēcikar went on talking in this manner, my father's happiness increased minute by minute. He almost forgot himself. The moment Tēcikar stopped talking, two bright sparks fell like two blossoms from a standing brass lighted lamp, standing nearby. "Sir, a good and auspicious omen indeed," continued Tēcikar. "He will be happy and prosperous. Go home and return soon." He made father a courteous presentation of clothes and gave him a sum of ten rupees for his expenses. I was standing nearby and watching all this, and an uncontrollable joy arose in my heart.

Father was delighted beyond description, since for all his life he had been worrying constantly about his family, plunged in a sea of trouble, and now for the first time he saw a sign that, quite unexpectedly, those worries will be over. He praised Tēcikar greatly, and on his way back home he kept exclaiming, "What a prince! What a grand seigneur! There is no one like him anywhere else! This must be the result of the merit we have earned in former lives."

When he came home, he told mother and all the others about Tēcikar's wish, saying, "Now I don't have to take Cāmā along. The compassion and protection of Paramēcuvaraṉ is with us."

Then, on an auspicious day, father took leave of everyone and left for Uṭaiyārpāḷaiyam, taking mother and my younger brother with him.

As I was saying goodbye to father then, I did not feel any regrets or sadness, for I realized that what was happening was the expression of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar's perfect love. I was convinced that he will be soon back, and we shall all be living together. I could see the signs of Tēcikar's affection daily in the Mutt.

The inmates of the Mutt, the patrons of the Mutt, the scholars who came—they all saw that I was the recipient of a very special attachment which Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar felt for me.

## Occasional stanzas and the rest

Tēcikar would demand from us that we compose and recite a few occasional stanzas for whatever great person would come to visit the Mutt. We would make us recite poems from the books we were studying, and explain their meaning. He also used to make me read selected passages from the commentary on *Civanāṉa Pāṣiyam*, from *Ilakkaṇaviḷakkac cūṟāvaḷi*, *Tolkāppiyappāyira virutti* and other works, and explain these himself to those who came to see him. The way he did it was very pleasant. He would comment on portions of good texts word by word, and the listeners were amazed at the skilful and agreeable manner he did it. At such occasions we always learned something new. It was mostly me who would do the reading then. On a few occasions, Kumāracāmit Tampirāṉ, too, used to read.

The *vittuvāṉs* who visited the monastery would arrive with *ślokams*, *kīrttaṉais* and various stanzas in praise of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. They would recite them in his presence, and give their meaning themselves, in great detail. I used to repeat these occasional Tamil praise-poems and Tamil *Kīrttaṉais*, and at the time when other important people arrived, I would recite them. By doing this I learned most of these stanzas by heart. There were a few others who would recite Sanskrit *ślokas* and Telugu *pattiyams* of that sort.

## The profit derived by the visitors

The conversations which Tēcikar held with the great people who came to see him were mostly concerned with matters of learning and scholarship. From time to time poems were recited, their meaning discussed, and at occasions like that even those who had no acquaintance with Tamil literature could not prevent waves of admiration and affection for Tamil to arise in their minds. "To come here without any knowledge of Tamil whatsoever is great loss and great pity. We will come here next with some knowledge of Tamil."

Scholars who came for the first time to the Mutt could see the support they would get; coming for the second time with a bit more of their knowledge they showed tremendous effort in order to become recipients of prizes and befitting citations. And the gentlemen of standing who came studied hard to be able to show that they too can say something about this or that Tamil literary world. Thus both groups of visitors, whether professional scholars or patrons, would derive great profit from their association with the Mutt.

## Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai

Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai who was District Munsif at Māyūram used to come once in a while to the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt, and he would never fail to bring with him poems composed in praise of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. I used to read them in public.

They would be simple in style and such that everyone would understand them at once and appreciate them. Wasn't it a rare thing for a Christian gentleman to sing the praises of the Head of the Śaiva monastery? And people were amazed all the more since the author of the panegyries was a person who was by nature not a flatterer, and who occupied a post of high rank in government.

As a former pupil of Śrī Piḷḷai, Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai had heard from the great savant about the excellence of the Mutt, and the outstanding achievements in scholarship as well as the moral rectitude of its Head. He could now see directly for himself that the monastery was a nursery devoted to the fostering of Tamil. Thus he came to hold Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar in high esteem.

In praising Tēcikar he once composed a poem expressing the following thought: "At the time when the English language raises its head, you have come forward with a cord of the vow to protect Tamil and make it thrive." This is the stanza:

*vāṉeṉ ṟutava varuñcupra maṇya varōtayaṉē*
*tāṉeṉṟu veṇṇavaṉ pāṣaiyiṉ nāṭṭiṟ ṟalaiyeṭukka*
*ēṉeṉṟu kēṭpava rillāt tamil̲ai iṉitaḷikka*
*nāṉeṉṟu kaṅkaṇaṅ kaṭṭikkoṇṭ ṭāyinta nāṉilattē*

"O Cuppiramaṇiya favoured by gods, large at heart like a cloud,
when in this land, the language of the white man raises its head high a loud,
you've bound yourself with the tie of a vow in this our land
to guard and foster sweet Tamil, and never bend!"

There were many poems in this tone composed by Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai. Anyone coming to the Mutt would ask, "Is it true that the venerable Munsif Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai has composed poems in honour of His Holiness?" At once Tēcikar would order me to recite such stanzas. I would do that with appropriate melody, and in addition explain the meaning.

## Famine in the year of *Tatu*

In the tenth year of the Cycle, a severe famine endangered the entire Tamilnadu. At that time Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar transformed many dry wastelands into irrigated fields in order to give work to those who kept coming in search of food from all over the country. He had special distribution centers set up in many places to offer rice-gruel to the hungry.

Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai commemorated these events in a number of stanzas praising Tēcikar. I give below one of those stanzas:

*eriyotta pañca miṭaṅkarai yoṭṭa tiṭaṅkarpaṟṟum*
*kariyot taṉapal luyirkaḷap pañcak karāmaṭikka*
*ariyot taṉaṉcup piramaṇi yaiya ṉaricakkaram*
*cariyot taṉavava ṉīntiṭum poṉveḷḷic cakkaramē*

Cuppiramaṇiya Ayyaṉ
Is the *Ari*
Whose wheel killed
The licentious alligator
Which caught the elephant.
The gold and silver coins you gave
Saved the lives of many
Caught by the burning
Alligator of famine.

There were times when he would compose some poems and send them to me in a letter with a comment saying, "Please read this to His Holiness." These letters were sometimes in poems. I still have a letter with a poem like this. I did as he wished.

Whenever it was necessary to arrange something related to legal matters of the Mutt, or if it was needed to write a petition in English or such like, Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar would send word to Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai. Those were days when lawyers would not come often to the Mutt. It was Tēcikar's custom to solve legal matters in a very swift and easy manner.

## His affection for me

Thus, when there was such matter to be dealt with, Tēcikar usually sent me with it to Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai. I would go to Māyūram to his house and talk to him, finish the matter for which I had come, and go back. On such occasions I used to obtain from Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai's younger brother whatever new verses he had composed, read them repeatedly, and read them also to him. I was delighted to do it. We used to discuss at length matters related to Tamil literature, and to Śrī Piḷḷai. Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai would not talk too much. Whatever he said would be pregnant with meaning. He was absolutely superb in his profession, and he had no need to seek anyone's favour; he also did not expect it. That's why he had not very many acquaintances.

It was because of my connection with the Mutt that I got acquainted with such a man. Even though when I first met him I was worried how I would get on with such an official, as days went by, my fear disappeared; he treated me with utmost kindness. Our intimacy grew steadily till the end of his days.

# Chapter 67

## Cantiracēkara Kavirāja Paṇṭitar

The attachment which Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar had for me increased daily, and I experienced its manifestation in many different ways. Thus he would send me to Kumpakōṇam and other places with messages for various influential persons with whom he had to discuss matters of import.

### A difficult situation

As at that time there was yet no railway connection to Kumpakōṇam I had to often walk there from Tiruvāvaṭuturai on foot. The distance was some 12 miles. It was my task to go there, meet the gentlemen I had to see, tell them all I was required to tell them, find out whatever there was to find out, and return. If I had to stay overnight in Kumpakōṇam, it would have been difficult to obtain proper food. As I did not really know anyone closely I couldn't just go and eat in someone's house. I had no money to spend on food in proper restaurants. In that situation I would enquire whether there would be places available where one could have food free.

There was in Kumpakōṇam a *dharmaśālā* which offered food to pilgrims as charity; it was situated at the temple of Apimukēcuvara Svāmi, to the east of the *Makāmakam* Tank. I would go there to pay my my compliments to the great soul who had established the charitable institution, after I had appeased my hunger. Sometimes, if the person whom I had come to meet would talk to me for a long time it would be late for the *dharmaśālā*, and there would be no meals.

Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar obviously hoped that I would get all that I needed from persons there. Or may be he thought that after all since I was anyhow receiving all I needed very easily from the Mutt I could take care of my needs myself, while being on those errands. Anyhow, those gentlemen I came to see thought, on the other hand, that everything had been arranged for me by the people of the Mutt since I come from there. There was of course nothing wrong or improper in these assumptions of the two parties. But since I kept foolishly silent, I suffered discomfort. I am certain that if the two parties would have found out, they would be very embarrassed. But I thought, since they have not realized for themselves, it wouldn't be proper for me to tell them and considered it my duty to attend to my work.

### The new pandit

Tiyākarāja Ceṭṭiyār, of the Government College in Kumpakōṇam, took, on 1.8.1876, half-a-year's leave of absence. In his place was appointed Tillaiyampūr Cantiracēkara Kavirāja Paṇḍitar, the Tamil Paṇdit at Cittūr High School. He studied under the famous scholar of Madras, Śrī Vicāka Perumāḷ Aiyar; he wrote and published *Pañcalakṣaṇa viṉāviṭai*, *Pālapōtavilakkaṇam*, and also published *viruttiyurai* on *Naṉṉūl*, commentaries on *Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai* and *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram*, and *Vaccaṇantimālai*, and a number of other books; he was the first who collected solitary, occasional stanzas from all over Tamilnadu and published them as an *Anthology of Occasional Poems*.

Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar felt a great desire to get acquainted with and talk to the man who had spent a long time in Madras, in company with such scholars as Tāṇṭavarāya Mutaliyār. It was then about one month that he settled in his new job. As he had heard about Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar's erudition and virtues, he was very eager to meet the great man. However, he had his reservations: 'It is such a great place. If we go just like that, it is doubtful whether we would be able to simply see him and talk to him! It would be better if we'd come with something tangible — with a small *pirapantam* composed in his honour.' And so it happened that he composed a *Nāṉmaṇimālai* in praise of Tēcikar.

## Tēcikar's desire

On the other hand, Tēcikar's desire to meet Paṇṭitar and be able to talk to him at leisure increased daily. A scholar with the title *Pulavar Cikāmaṇi*, whose name was Tāṇṭavarāya Tampirāṉ, had been for some time the Poet Laureate of the Mutt, and a teacher of Tēcikar in Tamil literature. He spent some time in Madras, and while there met a few famous Tamil scholars. It was through this learned monk that Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar got the information about the greatness of various savants in Madras. He hoped that, in addition, he would now gather detailed information through Cantiracēkara Kavirāja Paṇṭitar.

One day he called me and said, "You'll have to go to Kumpakōṇam." I thought it would be on behalf of the Mutt, to meet some people, concerning some business of the monastery as usual. He went on, "You will go and see Cantiracēkara Kavirāja Paṇṭitar and invite him to come here and have a talk with us." I was astonished that he did not consider it beyond his dignity to approach another *vittuvāṉ* with such request.

I of course wished very much, too, to meet Cantiracēkara Kavirāja Paṇṭitar and become acquainted with him; and so did the other students. I remembered well reading, while I was very young, his *Anthology of Occasional Poems*, a book filled with the sweet taste of Tamil, and that book has indeed filled me with great admiration for him. I set out for Kumpakōṇam at once.

## His desire

When I saw him in Kumpakōṇam and told him what my message was, he said, "I am guilty of great discourtesy. I am well informed of the greatness of His Holiness. As soon as I came to this place I should have gone to Tiruvāvaṭuturai to pay my respects. I have composed a *pirapantam*. Then he enquired in detail about the monastery, about Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, and about Śrī Piḷḷai. As was speaking, he showed more and more enthusiasm. He said then, "Today I go to the college. But on coming Saturday I'll definitely be there in the morning itself, and have a *darshan* of His Holiness. I request you to convey this."

I returned to Tiruvāvaṭuturai at about three o'clock in the afternoon and went straight to inform Tēcikar. As he had promised, Cantiracēkara Kavirāja Paṇṭitar arrived accompanied by his son Civakurunāta Piḷḷai next Saturday in the morning. He and Tēcikar had a very friendly conversation. Tēcikar asked about a number of scholars—about Vicāka Perumāḷ Aiyar, Caravaṇa Perumāḷ Aiyar, Makāliṅkaiyar, Tāṇṭavarāya Mutaliyār, Rāmāṉuja Kavirāyar, and others. Paṇṭitar took up many interesting details of their life histories and told them with great gusto, mentioning their respective special and outstanding character-traits.

## Nāṉmaṇimālai

On that afternoon Paṇṭitar performed a public reading, in the Mutt, of the *Nāṉmaṇimālai, The Garland of Four Jewels,* which he had composed and printed in honour of Tēcikar. The monks, some students, Maturai Irāmacāmi Piḷḷai and a few other *vittuvāṉs* were present then. Tēcikar's name was not there in every single stanza of that *pirapantam.* The monks protested: they thought it was not in the correct tradition. "What is the matter? You don't answer," exclaimed Caṭakōpācāriyar, the Sanskrit Pandit in Kumpakōṇam Town High school who was present there. "You can as well take this book and read its poems in some other monastery? Is it or isn't it necessary to have a reference to the Head of this Mutt in every stanza?" I was shocked and saddened to hear him burst out like this so unexpectedly. But Kavirāja Paṇṭitar remained silent, with utmost patience. Although he would have had the skill to give a proper answer to that invective, he did not wish to kindle the fire of an unnecessary dispute.

## Panegyric songs

The public recital of the *Nāṉmaṇimālai* was over. Next day, Paṇṭitar composed a number of new praise-poems on Tēcikar and read them out. I then composed a stanza in praise of Paṇṭitar and recited it.

*vaṟṟā varuṭcup piramaṇi yappeyar vaḷḷalmalarp*
*poṟṟāṭ pukalaippal pāmālaiyākap puṉaintaḻakāc*
*coṟṟā ṉiyaṟcan tiracē karapaṇṭita cukuṇaṉ*
*caṟṟay pavarkaḷum muṟṟā makiḻvu talaikkoḷavē.*

To the immense delight
Of even the beginning scholars
Cantiracēkara Paṇṭitaṉ
Versed in literature and of good disposition
Composed the garland of poetry
Celebrating the flower-like golden feet
Of liberal Cuppiramaṇiyaṉ
Of boundless grace.

Cuppiramaṇya Tēcikar hinted his appreciation. Paṇṭitar, very pleased, uttered a brief quartain in my praise.

*nēminā taṉvaḻuttum nittaṉ kailaiyuṟai*
*vāminā taṉpukaḻai vāḻttu meṉmēl-tōmiṉaṟcīr*
*cāminā takkaviñaṉ cāṟṟum paṉuvalaippōl*
*pāmiṉā ḷumpakar vaḷō*

Will even Goddess Saraswati
Be able to compose like
The poem of flawless Cāminātaṉ,
Composed on me who
Celebrated the glory of
Eternal Śiva of Kailācam
Who is worshipped by Viṣṇu.

The protests and questions uttered by the monks and Caṭakōpācāriyar had deprived him of his peace of mind, and my stanza in his praise came to him as a pleasant surprise. The quatrain about me was the result of this pleasure.

## What the monks were saying

When we were out of hearing, almost all the monks began to complain to me about Paṇṭitar. "What sort of Paṇṭitar is he, sir? Green grass is lovely from a distance. Why are you and His Holiness so very enthusiastic about him? His poems are tasteless. That poem about you—it's in fact *not* in your praise! He just wanted to show off—to prove to His Holiness that he could compose poetry on the spot as fast as you can. The stanza he composed, what is there to appreciate? In that one verse he in fact praises himself! And in the last line there is a faulty rhyme."

I tried to wave them away. "Well, it's wrong to treat scholars with disrespect like this. What will he think about this institution? Do you think he remained silent because he didn't know how to answer? That tradition which you invoked is a kind of rule from a few old books. But you don't even guess his true greatness. He had studied with the greatest of savants!" I attempted to end the whole discussion.

Paṇṭitar stayed nevertheless at Tiruvāvatuturai for a few days. Staying with him, I was able to get from him rare information. He on the other hand clarified with Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar a few moot points in *śāstras*. He also told me that he planned a second edition of his excellent anthology of occasional stanzas, and asked me to send him whatever occasional poems I would have collected or known to be included in that volume. Tēcikar treated him with proper respect and sent him off with due civility.

## Kavirāyar

While he stayed at Kumpakōṇam, Kavirāja Paṇṭitar visited Tiruvāvaṭuturai a few more times. In later days we exchanged many letters. As he had wished, I wrote down and sent to him many occasional stanzas for the second edition of his *Taṉippāṭaṟṟiraṭṭu*. Among these were a few of my own poems. He has included all of my contributions, and had the book published. My own poems appeared in his edition in print under the heading, "Compositions by Cāminātа Kavirāyar of Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai." Tēcikar, reading this, burst into laughter saying, "Well—no regard for tradition! That's why he put it like this!" We all laughed, and a few friends began to call me, teasingly, "Kavirāyarvāḷ", "The honoured Poet."

# Chapter 68

# Tiricirapuram Kōvinta Piḷḷai

While Caṉpakak Kuṟṟālak Kavirāyar and myself with a few monks were critically studying the *Kamparāmāyaṇam*, certain doubts and uncertainties arose here and there in our minds, and since we saw no way how to clear them we were rather dejected. At that time we heard that a well-known scholar by name of Tiricirapuram Kōvinta Piḷḷai was an expert in teaching the *Kamparāmāyaṇam*.

## 'The Supreme Crest of Learning

He had the entire *Kamparāmāyaṇam* printed; he published the *Cuntarakāṇṭam* with his own commentary. He has earned the title *Vitvatjana Cēkarar*—'The Supreme Crest of Learning'; in addition, he was well-versed in the exegesis of *Tivviyappirapantam* and in the texts of the Vaiṣṇava *campiratāyam*. If he could be invited, we hoped to gain great profit by listening to his teaching us the *Rāmāyaṇam*. At that time he lived in a village called Kapistalam, north of Pāpanācam. After having taught many texts to a very rich man called Śrīmāṉ Turaicāmi Mūppaṉār of that place, he was teaching him *Kamparāmāyaṇam*.

We waited for an opportune moment, and then we informed Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar that we greatly desired to study the *Kamparāmāyaṇam* from Kōvinta Piḷḷai who was at the moment staying at Kapistalam. Tēcikar had heard of Kōvinta Piḷḷai's expertise before. However, as he had never been to Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai Mutt yet, the two men have not met in person. Tēcikar who would do anything to encourage the study of the students, immediately arranged for proper people to go to Mūppaṉār and invite Kōvinta Piḷḷai to come to Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai, stay there for some time, and give discourses on *Rāmāyaṇam* to the eager students.

## My Excitement

Mūppaṉār described apparently to Kōvinta Piḷḷai the great importance and excellence of Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai Mutt, and making all the necessary arrangements sent him without hesitation to us. Along came a Śrī Vaiṣṇava teacher from

Tēraḻuntūr. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar found for them comfortable places to stay, made arrangements for proper food to be sent to them, and saw to it that they would lack nothing; he appointed a special person to oversee all these arrangements. He asked me with great urgency to watch everything and to find out whether everything has been done with the utmost care and propriety. I was excited in the hope that by getting acquainted with that scholar, I could learn a lot of useful things.

Next day after his arrival to Tiruvāvaṭuturai, Kōvinta Piḷḷai visited in the afternoon Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and proclaimed, "Having seen the set up and the kind of students' crowd, I must say that I am entirely satisfied." Tēcikar then asked him to choose some portion of *Kamparāmāyaṇam* for commentary, and he began with the very first stanza of Kāṭcippaṭalam of *Cuntarakāṇṭam*. I stood next to him and read out the poems. But since he was almost entirely deaf, I had real trouble in making him hear what I was reading. He kept interrupting me in a threatening voice: "Why don't you read loud so that I can hear?"

## Hatred of music

He was utterly irritated by my reciting the poems in a melodious way, with suitable tunes. "Why do you confuse me by singing?" he shouted. "What is this, a concert performance?" He then tried to show me how they scan poems in places like Tiricirapuram and some other places, adding: "This is the way to recite poetry, no? You don't know how to read, do you!" I had to laugh inside. I thought, 'Well, it seems that Śrī Piḷḷai was not the only one to dislike music.' This gentleman too joins the crowd of music-haters!' The way he wanted me to read the text I recognized at once: it was the same way of scanning verses as had been used by Śrī Piḷḷai and Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār, and I was familiar with it. Therefore it was no problem for me to start reading at once in the way Kōvinta Piḷḷai had indicated. He was content: "Yes, this is the correct way of reciting!"

Tēcikar laughed, "Well, I must say! It seems that Cāminātaiyar is proficient even in this melody!"

I said: "I have had yet no opportunity to squeeze it out. Only just now." I knew that he had used the word 'melody' ironically.

As I was straining the whole day to recite so that Kōvinta Piḷḷai's near-deaf ears would hear, at the end of the day I was quite hoarse. He explained the meaning of the verses continuously, and in between he would insert as illustrations portions of the commentaries on the *Tivyappirapantam*. As he was hearing these passages in the *maṇipiravāḷa* diction, Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar was very pleased. He liked these commentaries. He was really happy to see someone coming with such extensive knowledge of Vaiṣṇava literature. He would ask them to give portions from those commentaries and explain. He would feel happy listening to them and give them presents.

## Bicephalous ruby'

One day Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar asked Kōvinta Piḷḷai to put us all to a test. Therefore he asked everyone of us a few questions pertaining to grammar and literature. When it was my turn, he asked me to recite the stanza beginning with *ōtakkēḷ neñcē* from *Nūṟṟeṭṭut Tiruppatiyantāti* and explain its meaning. As I was explaining, I came across the line *añcai māmaṇiyaip pōṟṟu*, I gave the meaning (Praise the five [and] the Great Gem). I explained it as follows: *añcai* = the five weapons of Viṣṇu, *māmaṇiyai* = Kaustupam worn on the Holy Chest, *Pōṟṟu* = worship. At once he stopped me with a gesture of his hand. "We must not explain it like this! The correct explanation is this: we must separate the words differently, into *añcu ai māmaṇi* = five (by) five great ruby, and the meaning of it is, the great *mantiram* called Bicephalous ruby with twenty-five syllables." We listened, and we were astonished.

Tēcikar looked at us and said, "Do you see now the utility of listening to those who are deep in the *Campiratāyam*—the esoteric tradition?" And he praised the *vittuvāṉ* greatly.

## Secluded place

Next morning, Kōvinta Piḷḷai said to me, "I must go out a little. Tell someone to come along to help me." So, I sent along with him a student of mine, a Irāmakiruṣṇa Piḷḷai. That boy followed the Vaiṣṇava tradition; he always wore the *tirumaṇ* mark on his forehead. While studying, whenever passages of anti-Viṣṇu came, he would be very much worried. I used to tell him, "This is just the silly way how one sect abuses another sect. We should just ignore it and look at its literary merits." Usually I pacified him.

Because in that completely Śaivite establishment there was no contact with Vaiṣṇavism, he was longing for any Vaiṣṇavite to come to the Mutt. When Kōvinta Piḷḷai came, he felt like a person dying from thirst coming across cool sweet lemonade. He was beside himself with bliss. He followed the scholar everywhere like his shadow. And he listened to him in rapture, himself saying nothing.

Now he accompanied Kōvinta Piḷḷai with a mixed feeling of fearful devotion. "It must be a place where no one comes," said Kōvinta Piḷḷai, and he answered at once, "Yes, of course, sir", and showed him the way. The lad thought that Kōvinta Piḷḷai wanted to perform his morning ablutions and duties. The old man kept walking, asking from time to time eagerly, "Well? Is that it? Where are you taking me?"

"Here we are", said the boy finally after they had arrived in *Lakṣattōppu*, a grove, on the other side of the village, about a mile away.

The old man, exhausted by the long walk, became terribly angry. "You fool! I wanted to go just round the corner to smoke in peace my cigar, and you take me to a distant place!" And he raised his cane to give him a thrashing.

"Oh my God!" screamed Irāmakiruṣṇa Piḷḷai. "Who'd think that you want to smoke!" And he ran away. Kōvinta Piḷḷai finished his cigar and came back. But he was still fuming. "You have sent along such a nincompoop! He had me totally exhausted!" I had been informed by the poor lad of what had happened, and so I tried to allay his anger. But the man was really tired by walking the long distance in the heat of the morning sun on a completely treeless road, and I did not know how to pacify him.

When he was coming in the afternoon of that day to visit Tēcikar as usual, I saw that he had a cane in his hand and was looking around as if searching for someone. "Have you lost something?" I asked. "I am looking for that brat! I'll complain to His Holiness and tell him to drive him away from here!" I left him without a word and ran to warn Irāmakiruṣṇa Piḷḷai: "Don't dare to show yourself to him!" Poor thing! How he had hoped to see a Vaiṣṇava master, how long had he waited for an opportunity to meet one — and what a perversion of his expectations this was! Tēcikar was later informed about the whole thing.

## Students ask questions

Kōvinta Piḷḷai stayed at Tiruvāvaṭuturai for some days and gave talks on *Kamparāmāyaṇam*. When he talked about matters pertaining to Vaiṣṇava tradition we were content to hear something new. However, in other respects he has not earned our admiration. There were a few times that some of the *tampirāṉs* asked him questions from other texts as if to clarify their doubts. Then he would not know how to answer; he would be embarrassed; he would try to change the subject or wave it aside. There were fellows among the *tampirāṉs* who, in their pride that they used to be students of Śrī Piḷḷai, even sought to confuse a few times the old man.

When the old man heard the provocative questions, framed by the coarse, arrogant young fellows so that he could not answer them, he used to say in his confusion and embarrassment, "Well, you have all studied under Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai. He had been an outstanding student while in Tiricirapuram. And here he studied books composed by such great man as Civañāṉa Cuvāmikaḷ and improved his scholarship. You don't need any teacher any more. You just look things up once or twice, and you'll know. You know where and how."

I asked, "People say that Śrī Piḷḷai learnt from *you*. Is it true?"

"No," he answered with vigour. "That's a lie. He was older than me in years, and better than me in learning."

## Saying goodbye

Since he was an orthodox Vaiṣṇavite he felt uncomfortable in a strictly Śaivite ambience. In addition, because of the provocative questions of the *tampirāṉs*, he had no wish to prolong his stay. He sent word to Tēcikar that he wished to leave. As soon as he was thus informed, Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar presented him with a festive shawl and appropriate honorarium, and sent him away saying, "Please do come often." The old scholar returned to Kapistalam.

# Chapter 69

# Rao Bahadur Tiru Paṭṭāpirāma Piḷḷai

A gentleman, well-known to my Master, Rao Bahadur Tiru Paṭṭāpirāma Piḷḷai, lived in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi. His native village was Tiruvēṭṭīcuvaraṉ Pēṭṭai. Due to his educational qualifications, ceaseless effort and his faultless behaviour, he has risen step by step from a small official to the very high office—at that time greatly esteemed—of Deputy Collector, and as such became quite famous. His superiors held him in high esteem while his subordinates feared him. Being well educated in Tamil too, he had a genuine regard for Tamil scholars. Wherever he went, he sought them out and derived much pleasure from such conversations. He was very strict in matters of profession. But if one worked really hard, he would never shirk to encourage and help them. He was a Vaiṣṇava, and very devoted, too. When it came to poor people, he was full of compassion and ready to help. He was also very devoted to Makāvittuvāṉ Śrī Piḷḷai, and it was through him that he heard about the splendour of Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt and the outstanding character of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. While we were at Tiruvāvaṭuturai he held a high position of *Hūsūr cireṣṭatar* — a high official position — in Tiricirapuram. One day he arrived with a few friends to the Mutt.

## His amazement

Paṭṭāpirāma Piḷḷai, filled with energy and power, used to deal from the position of authority with many bureaucrats and take decisions in matters of great import, watched carefully the daily arrangements and proceedings in the monastery—the worship, the charities, the teaching—all performed faultlessly and smoothly, and was genuinely amazed. He praised the place, not hiding his surprise: "There's no police here; no pomp; and yet everything runs without a flaw! How much esteem and affection is there for learning here! What attachment, what discipline everyone shows *vis-á-vis* the boss!" Watching the scholarly qualities, pure character and the kindness of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, he praised him saying, "It is due to him that this place shines as a superb example. It would be enough if there would be just a few like him in Tamilnadu; our language and our culture would achieve again their ancient glory."

## Attempt at a dictionary

Once, in a conversation with Tēcikar, he suggested that there was a great need of a good dictionary of Tamil; and asked Tēcikar to persuade Śrī Piḷḷai to take up the task of compiling one. Tēcikar promised to do so. However, it proved impossible to realize that idea.

Since then, whenever he came that side, Paṭṭāpirāma Piḷḷai would visit Tiruvāvaṭuturai and see Tēcikar in order to have a friendly chat with him.

## Welcoming song

At the beginning of September 1877 he came again to Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai. He was very pleased to see so many students. He put their knowledge to test, and was quite satisfied. At the wish of Tēcikar each one among the students composed a welcoming stanza for him. Mine ran like this—

*kārnōkki niṟku mayilpōla nīṅkiya kātalaṉṟaṉ*
*tērnōkki niṟku maṭantaiyar pōlat tikaippaṟavip*
*pārnōkki niṟkuṇaṟ paṭṭāpi rāmā parākkirama*
*nērnōkki niṉṟaṉam yāṅkaḷel lāṉiṉ ṉikaḻvaravē*

Like a young lady who stands
Watching with longing
The chariot of her beloved
Who had departed
Like a peacock who stands
Watching with greed
The approaching rain
So we were all standing and waiting
Expecting thy coming
Excellent lord Paṭṭāpirāma
Who stands
Firm and calm guarding the realm!

Hearing all of it, and rather pleased, Paṭṭāpirāma Piḷḷai turned to Tēcikar and reminded him of his old promise: "You have so many students here. If His Holiness sets his mind to it, a dictionary could be accomplished soon." He pleaded for his idea. "Śrī Piḷḷai could have had fulfilled this useful and necessary task. Instead, he spent his time and has thrown away his life in constantly composing various *purāṇams* and *pirapantams!* If great scholars would only come forward doing things which are needed and useful to the people, Tamil would prosper well!" Tēcikar said just, "We'll see". He took leave of Tēcikar.

## Letter in verse

After Paṭṭāpirāma Piḷḷai had returned to Tiricirapuram, he composed four poems to express his delight in having visited Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai, and to remind Tēcikar of his promise; he had them printed and sent to Tēcikar.

*iṉiyatamiḻ ṉāṭeṅku miṅkilīcu paravitamiḻk kēṟṟa miṉṟik*
*kaṉiyakaṉṟa māpōlak kaiviṭappeṟ ṟiruppataiyāṉ kaṇṭāṟ ṟātu*
*muṉiyiṉuruk koṇṭavuṉṟaṉ muṉṟiliṭai muttamiḻum muḻaṅku meṉṟē*
*taṉiyuṟucup piramaṇiyat tēcikā niṉaiyaṉṟu taricit tēṉē*

Unbearable it's to see
The spread of English everywhere
Where sweet Tamil is spoken
Tamil is deserted unpatronized
Like a fruitless mango tree.
I saw and prayed to you
That day
Oh unique Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar
Of saintly appearance
In whose courtyard
The three Tamils thunder loud.

*taṟicitta vaṉṟukaṇṭēṉ tamiḻmaṭantai taḷirttulakil taṉpēr nāṭṭip*
*paricupeṟa niṉaiyaṭaintu palavāṟāy muyalvatuvum pāriṉ maṉṉar*
*taricikā maṇiyēnī tamiḻmayilaik kāppatuvum tamiḻar yārkkum*
*poruvilpāṇ ṭiyaṉcōḻaṉ cēraṉeṉa vayaṅkumuṉaip puṉita ṉeṉṟum*

Oh excellent gem
Worn by the kings of this world! you!
The unparallelled Pāṇṭya, Cōḻa and Cēra
Of the Tamils!
I saw the other day
The sprouting Lady Tamil
Imprinting her name in this world
Praising you
The pure one
Protecting the peacock Tamil
And scholars trying
Every means
To come to you
To get prizes.

*akarāti tamiḻiṉai yaṟṟateṉ viyappuṟavoṉ ṟaṉṟōr yārum*
*pakaṟāti ruttaliṉip pāriluḷa tamiḻmaṭappaṇ ṇavarkaṭ kellām*
*nikarāti ṟukkuṇeṭum paḷiyeṉṟu muṉpukaṉṟu neṭiya cīṭṭut*
*takarāti ṟukkumoru ciṟukuḻaiyi liṭṭaṉuppit taḷarvāy niṉṟēṉ*

Since great ones
Are silent not realizing
That
There is nothing equal
To a dictionary for Tamil
I have sent long letters before
Safely in small boxes
To all heads of Mutts in this world
So that
People will not blame constantly
And I stand disappointed.

*taḷarnturukic camucayattā lāṟṟēṉāyṭ tirumukattait taricittēṉkāṇ*
*vaḷarntōṅku matiyuṭaiyāy ñānikaṭkōr tāyakamē vaḷḷa lēyuṉ*
*kiḷarvacaṉat tāṟṟaḷarntēṉ keṭṭiyeṉa niccayittēṉ kēṭṭuk koṇṭa*
*vaḷamvāynta vakarāti varumeṉṟē tirumpiṉaṉkāṇ vaṉappiṉ mikkōy*

One with great wisdom
Refuge for wise men
And liberal,
Tired, losing heart
Lost in doubt
I saw you, the great one!
From your words
I knew it for certain,
The rich dictionary is coming.
Thinking so, I returned,
You, the beautiful one!

Reading this letter filled us all with amazement. Even though his poems did not have the quality of a true poet's stanzas, they manifested well Paṭṭāpirāma Piḷḷai's ardent devotion to the cause of Tamil. Wasn't it a marvel that a high government official possessed the skills and the motivation to compose poems filled with so much genuine emotion?

For a few days which followed his letter Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and we discussed the topic of the Tamil dictionary. The printed edition as well as the manuscripts of the *Caturakarāti* compiled by Father Beschi alias Vīramāmuṉivar were brought for inspection. We picked up the palm-leaf manuscripts of the *nikaṇṭus*, dusted them and put them together. This effort persevered for a few days. Then, all talk about a dictionary died down. Whenever there arose any allusion to Paṭṭāpirāma Piḷḷai the only thought that remained was, 'What to do if he would suddenly appear and ask at what stage are the preparations for a Tamil dictionary?'

## The *Tampirāṉs'* recommendation

It was then the custom of Vicuvaliṅkat Tampirāṉ and a few others who were studying under me, to perform the service of massaging the feet of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar while he was taking his daily siesta after lunch. While they were at it, Tēcikar would enquire of them about their lessons and studies; he would ask then the content of the lessons and put questions about them. After they answered and when they saw Tēcikar was happy, it seems they requested him with the suggestion that I should be kept in Tiruvāvaṭuturai permanently, a house built for me, and provided with a regular monthly salary. When Tēcikar saw me he said, "Well, sir! Your students, the *tampirāṉs*, recommend that necessary facilities be provided for you." And, saying this with real pleasure, he added as a sort of exhortation, "Let you be good teacher to them."

Those words were a balsam for my heart. I did not worry too much whether the *tampirāṉs'* requests will materialize. When I realized that my efforts and studies were not in vain, and when I thought of their affection, I felt a tremendous satisfaction.

# Chapter 70

## New House

There is an *akkirakāram* running east to west on the northern side of the temple tank at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai. At the orders of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, a convenient two storeyed house was built at the eastern tip of the northern row. Tēcikar had good materials despatched from the Mutt and had the house built. When construction was over, Tēcikar himself came over one day to scrutinize and approve it. No one obviously knew for what purpose that house was being built. Only the *tampirāṉs* rejoiced saying, "Our wish is about to be granted." I too could make an informed guess.

### My Parents' Arrival

One day Tēcikar asked me: "Hasn't your father promised to come back here? How is it he has not yet returned?" "He stays there with his friends' substantial support", I replied.

"Write to him at once, to come over here for permanent stay", Said Tēcikar. "It's not good for him at his age to live away from you."

What Tēcikar said was true. The fact that I was separated from my parents made me sad. But I had not the courage to change it. I should either have gone to the place where they lived; or I should have made them come to where I was living. Tēcikar's instructions put life into me. I wrote the letter. Father and mother arrived at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai within a week.

### Domestic Life

I realized only then fully how considerate Tēcikar had been. When I thought how affectionate he was to make me live with my parents in a new house that he had had specially built, my heart expanded with gratitude. Not only that. I praised my good fortune realizing that he was keen on my starting regular married life under that roof and becoming a permanent resident of Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai.

Tēcikar, who had at his command plenty of space, rich means and men, had a heart filled to the brim with kindness. It was in his character to serve others; bestowing benefits made him happy. The pleasure of giving is greater than the pleasure of receiving gifts. As Tiruvaḷḷuvar says so beautifully,

> *īttuvakku miṉpam aṟiyārkol tammuṭaimai*
> *vaittiḻakkum vaṉka ṇavar* (228)
>
> Don't the hard-eyed, who lay up and lose their possessions,
> know the pleasure of giving?

Tēcikar was a living example of the meaning of this verse.

We occupied the new house in November 1877; this gave my parents many times the pleasure it gave me. After having been knocked about so that they lived every week in another house and every month in another place, they found settled life at one spot like the bliss of Indra's paradise. I took up life as a married man. Whatever we needed for our family came from the Mutt. At first, though, a few among the administrators of the monastery were jealous, "Why should some strangers be offered so much comfort?" It is always the nature that a few small souls like this are present in great establishments. These jealous persons even attempted to throw a few obstacles in our way. They stopped giving vessels usually given to those occupying new houses.

## Poṉṉucāmi Ceṭṭiyār

Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar got to know about this somehow, and therefore he instructed Mu. Poṉṉucāmi Ceṭṭiyār, the business secretary of the Mutt who also studied under me, to keep an eye on everything: "You should arrange to supply, after informing me, what Cāminātaiyar wants at what time. You should know their requirements for their house and supply them. You are responsible for it", he ordered.

Poṉṉucāmi Ceṭṭiyār was a very modest and affectionate man. He studied Tamil literature with ardour and with pleasure. He also had the skills to compose poetry. A lot of very influential, big men visited the Mutt frequently. He always knew how to treat them correctly, and that skill earned him and the Mutt good name. He had absolute confidence in his master, as well as an adoring attitude to his teacher. He spent all days of his life as a true servant of the monastery. Once the Head of the Mutt had placed our family in his care, he took up on him that duty most conscientiously. He would oversee daily whatever we would need, and actually had it sent to our house.

Because of his supervision, the attempts of the envious, hostile persons could bear no fruit. They were afraid that their mischief would reach the ears of His Holiness, and thus, step by step, they finally gave up, and tried to forget their envy. So we received every day, without failure, the foodstuffs and other objects which we needed.

## Paddy and Money

Three wagons came and stopped in front of our house one day. A few workmen brought and installed two portable granaries in the house. A few others poured into each of these thirty *kalams* of paddy, smeared the outside with mud openings. "We brought these here by the order of His Holiness", they said as they left. Shortly after Poṉṉucāmi Ceṭṭiyār came and said: "His Holiness ordered sixty *kalams* of paddy for your use to be brought to your house. It wouldn't be proper to send you daily rations from the Mutt as we do to strangers who come to visit; you should be treated as permanent members of our establishment. That is His Holiness' pleasure. This sum, too, should be given to you for your other expenses by his order." With these words he placed the sum of fifty rupees in my hand for other expenses.

I was beside myself with joy. Father was at that moment engaged in preparing sandal paste for his daily Śiva *pūjai*. When I gave the money to him I just stood there unable to speak. He received it and touched his eyes with it, "We owe all this to the grace of Parameśvaran." Saying this, he stood speechless expressing his gratitude through his eyes.

On that day in the afternoon father went to the Mutt, met Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, and gave expression to his boundless joy and gratitude for the paddy and the money we have received. Tēcikar said then, "The highest officials of this Mutt receive only five *kalams* of paddy as monthly payment. Although we would like to give you more, we cannot go against the customs valid here without giving rise to slanderous comment. Carry on with this for the necessary expenses, and if you do, you can count on us for further assistance whenever need arises; you need not worry about anything."

## To the *Tampirāṉs'* satisfaction

The sad times when father and I had to live separately came to an end. We had a permanent place to stay, a regular income, and the support of a great establishment. I became one of the persons of Tiruvāvaṭuturai monastery. All my students were very happy. My new life was firmly anchored in the Mutt, and I was now a person *leaning* on the Mutt in every respect; the students thought, 'Well, he won't ever leave here anymore', and this thought filled them with profound satisfaction.

## How father spent time

My father, forgetting all his former worries, spent his time in complete happiness, performing his daily Śiva *pūjai*, and singing *kīrttaṉams*. The necessity of singing to earn a living was over. Whenever he had a free moment and was happy he would sing. It has become an established custom that his presence would always be required when a musician would visit the monastery. When there was a festival celebrated in the Mutt, Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar would also send word to father to participate.

When scholars or artists such as Makā Vaittiyanātaiyar or Tirukkōṭikā Kiruṣṇaiyar visited the Mutt they would not go away without seeing my father. Tiru Tiyākarāja Śāstrī of Putukkōṭṭai, whenever he came to the Mutt and talked to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, used to say that he would like to go and listen to a few *kīrttaṉams* sung by my father and would leave. He would ask him to sing this and that, and he would not stop just with listening. He would praise highly everything he did offer. Because he has not heard from others many *kīrttaṉams* of Kaṉam Kiruṣṇaiyar, he would mostly ask him to sing them and listen. While listening to the *nāyaka nāyakī bhāva patams* he would be utterly enthusiastic: "What rare beauty! What exquisite melodies!"

Tirukkōṭikā Kiruṣṇaiyar was an excellent violinist. He played the accompaniment to Makā Vaittiyanātaiyar. He learned to sing from my father many *kīrttaṉams* composed by Kaṉam Kiruṣṇaiyar. Kuḻantai Vēlaṉ, a *nākacuram* player, living in Tiruvāvaṭuturai, also learnt a few *kīrttaṉams* from my father and played them on *nākacuram*. As he was playing them, the listeners, recognizing compositions in new style, and having found out that he had obtained them from my father, saw my father and requested him to sing a few *kīrttaṉams*. They would greatly enjoy them. Kaṉam Kiruṣṇaiyar's *kīrttaṉams* created a new fashion and were much in demand.

Thus, by God's grace, the heart of every single person in our family was satisfied, and our life was at that time the life of fulfilled, happy people.

# Chapter 71

## Laudatory Verses

A disciple of the Tarumapura Mutt, an outstanding Tamil scholar, who had resided in the holy city of Kāśī for a few years — such was Śrī Paramacivat Tampirāṉ who, after having become a great admirer of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, obtained the permission of the Head of the Tarumapura Mutt and came to spend the greater part of his days at Tiruvāvaṭuturai. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar was greatly attached to him. At Tiruvāvaṭuturai, he studied and analyzed the best works of Tamil literature, and was also teaching the students of the Mutt.

He used to study, with Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, several Tamil texts and Śaiva *śāstirams*, and with the Sanskrit scholars attached to the Mutt books on the grammar of Sanskrit. He was a good speaker. He was also quite talented as a Tamil poet, of sharp intellect, and handsome, attractive to look at. Caṇpakak Kuṟṟālak Kavirāyar and I studied once with him the whole of *Naṉṉūl Viruttiyurai*. As he had studied the Sanskrit grammatical treatises, he explained to us several delicate points in the Tamil commentary. While we studied with him we realized very well that no one can ever say to know everything, not withstanding how much and how long one had studied.

### The *Mummaṇik kōvai*

This Paramacivat Tampirāṉ composed a *Mummaṇik kōvai*, in praise of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar to whom he was greatly attached. The *pirapantam* was first read in public in Tēcikar's presence. Together with the benedictory poem it contained thirty-one stanzas. Ten scholars contributed twenty-six laudatory verses to it. These verses were printed together with the *pirapantam* by Cantiracēkara Kavirāja Paṇṭitar of Tillaiyampūr.

At that time the *tampirāṉs* and the students of the Mutt composed laudatory verses. They were published along with their special qualifications as headings for each of those stanzas.

One of these, introducing the special qualifications, ran as follows: *Aṟucīrk kaḻineṭilaṭiyāciriya viruttam* composed by Caṇpakak kuṟṟālak Kavirāyar, a descendent of Mēlakaram Tirikūṭa Rājappak Kavirāyar of Pāṇṭiya country and one of the disciples in Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt.

## My Stanzas

I too composed two laudatory verses. I had long been waiting for the opportunity to express Tēcikar's special affection for me and his innumerable kindnesses, but did not know how. Fortunately, the possibility to compose and publish laudatory verses provided the opportunity. In the second stanza I referred to the magnanimity of Tēcikar who had supplied me with the twin blessings of both material and intellectual assistance. It ran as follows:

*tēṉāṭṭu malarpoḻiṟkō muttiyiṟcup piramaṇiya tēva neṉṉait*
*tāṉāṭṭa viruporuḷu moruṅkaruḷta yānitiyiṉ calacat tāṇmēl*
*vāṉāṭṭi ṉamutēyppa mummaṇikkō vaiyainaviṟṟi vaṉaintāṉ yārum*
*mēṉāṭṭu nayacukuṇap paramaciva muṉivaravit tuvaciṅ kēṟē*

Paramaciva Muṉivar
The good and faultless one
Liked by one and all
And a lion among the poets
Offered the *Mummaṇikkōvai*
Sweeter than the heavenly nectar
At the lotus feet
Of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēvaṉ
Of Kōmutti, where
The flowers of the grove
Are full with honey
His Grace
Implanted me here
Blessing me with
Wealth and learning.

## 'The Vittuvāṉ of the Mutt'

Putting down my name as the heading for the laudatory poems, Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar said that I should be described as "The *Vittuvāṉ* of Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt." I was not for it, and I said, "I am not in the least fit to bear this title — a place adorned by Śrī Piḷḷai. I shall consider it a signal honour if I am put down as a student of His Holiness."

"You may object to that title, but you cannot object to one other thing," said Tēcikar.

"What is that?" I asked.

"You should be designated as Cāminātaiyar of Tiruvāvaṭuturai."

"There certainly is nothing wrong with that since Your Holiness had made me in fact a resident of this place," said I.

The caption above my contribution ran like this: *'Arucīrkkalineṭilati āciriya viruttam* stanzas composed by Cāmināta Aiyar of Tiruvāvaṭuturai, son of Vēṅkaṭacuppa Aiyar, and a pupil of His Holiness, the Head of the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt."

The name "Cāmināta Aiyar of Tiruvāvaṭuturai" stuck to me since. Although Tiruvāvaṭuturai is just the name of a small town, it has lent to my name a certain dignity, and that made me proud and happy.

The very fact that Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar wished to give me the title of the *vittuvāṉ* of the Mutt made me very very happy. It revealed to me what was his opinion of me. Although that title has not been then printed in the edition of the *Mummaṇik kōvai*, Tēcikar had later his own way. After I had obtained the job on the staff of the College at Kumpakōṇam, he always addressed his letters to me, and inscribed my name on the fly-leaf of the books he sent me, with the words, "Our Poet Laureate", or "Our Distinguished Poet Laureate."

## Vēṇuvaṉa Liṅka Vilācam

The courtyard of the Audience Hall at the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt in those days was a spacious and beautiful thatched *pantal*. Vēṇuvaṉa Liṅkat Tampirāṉ, who was then the *Periya Kāṟupāṟu* at Cevantipuram, wished to see it as woodwork from end to end, similar to what they had in Kōviṟpaṭṭi, and he made great efforts to get that done. Hearing of this plan, the zamindars of Ceṟṟūr and Civakiri send enough teakwood for the purpose. They also had a large group of carpenters coming from around Tirunelvēli. Their boss, whom they called *Putiyavaṉ Ācāriyār* supervised the work sincerely. The work went on for a year. The Hall was built as a vast dome without any supporting columns. In honour of the *tampirāṉ* who had the work executed, the hall was named Vēṇuvaṉa Liṅka Vilācam.

A grand ceremony was held on the day the hall was declared open—on the first day of the month of *Tai* in the year *Īcuvara* (mid-January of 1878). The function was attended by scholars and members of the élite from far and near. As such a hall was nowhere to be seen in the Cōḻa country, people kept coming just to have a look at it. On the inner panels of the upper loft of the hall were painted scenes from the life of Śaiva saints and illustrations of the stories of the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭal*.

At noon of the festive day there was a feeding of the Brahmins, a worship of Maheśvara, and other functions, and at night there was a procession in the town. *Tampirāṉs* and others composed stanzas in praise of the huge hall. After the procession in the town, Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar came and occupied the seat of honour in his state-room. Then, at his instance, I read the laudatory poems on Vēṇuvaṉa Liṅka Vilācam. There was a huge gathering of *tampirāṉs* and other people. Śri Rāmaliṅkat Tampirāṉ, who was then the Head of Kāśī Mutt at Tiruppaṉantāḷ, came, too, and took part in the celebrations.

### Poems of Praise

*Tampirāṉs* and others had composed poems individually. They all vied with each other to show off in their respective creations a flattering superiority unknown to the next person. They had not shown their stanzas to anyone in advance, keeping them hidden to the last moment. It was their opinion that everyone must be caught by surprise at the unsurpassed excellence of their product. I too joined the crowd.

I was given poems composed by Paramacivat Tampirāṉ, Kumāracāmit Tampirāṉ, and other *tampirāṉs*, as well as by Maturai Irāmacāmi Piḷḷai. I collected them all, and began to read them out. In total about thirty pieces. I set the whole lot to music, and tried to bring out the literary excellence of each. I read out the three poems I composed. In one of the stanzas I had composed myself I had said, "This hall is called by everyone 'A dome without pillars'. I would not say so since the Southern breeze keeps blowing through it so often." That play upon the word *kāl* was appreciated by the entire audience since I had made that one word mean, once, 'pillar' or 'column', and the second time, 'wind' or 'breeze'.

Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar heard out everything, and then expressed his satisfaction saying, "These verses are good. They're all in Śrī Piḷḷai's style." It seemed to us that there could be no higher praise than this. This praise pronounced in front of such a gathering filled us with boundless delight. We went to sleep that night with tender thoughts of Śrī Piḷḷai.

## Chapter 72

# The honours I received

Vēṇuvaṉa Liṅkat Tampirāṉ, the *Periya Kāṟupāṟu* of the Southern Region mentioned by me before, had a magnificent large Mutt constructed at Cevantipuram near Ampācamuttiram and named it "Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcika Vilācam". He then came one day to Tiruvāvaṭuturai and entreated Tēcikar to kindly visit Cevantipuram with the brotherhood of monks, stay there for a few days, and inspect the villages. In the same month of *Tai* of the year 1878, the Vayinākaram family of Amarāvati Putūr had arranged for the *kumpāpiṣēkam* of the Śrī Mīṉākṣicuntarēcuvarar temple in Maturai. They also came to Tēcikar and requested him to grace the occasion of that temple-dedication with his presence.

### Arrangements for the pilgrimage

In compliance with the request of the *Tampirāṉ* as well as of those wealthy *vaiśyas*, Tēcikar decided to go to Maturai for the *kumpāpiṣēkam* and then reach Cevantipuram in the course of a pilgrimage to the South. Elaborate and proper arrangements were made for the journey.

Announcements and invitations were sent out to various patrons and great personages along the route. Some of them planned to come to Tiruvāvaṭuturai and participate in Tēcikar's southern pilgrimage. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar wrote a letter to Śrī Namacivāya Tēcikar, *Ciṉṉa Paṭṭam* of Kalliṭaikkuṟicci, inviting him to join entourage at Maturai. Provisions needed on the journey were prepared, and facilities for travel and stay for those who accompanied him *en route* were also made.

## Taking leave of father

Tēcikar summoned me to his presence and said, "We're about to make a pilgrimage to the South. Here and there we shall meet quite a few powerful men and important scholars. You too must come along, Makā Vaittiyanātaiyar and his brother have sent word that they would join us at Maturai. While you are gone with us, won't your parents miss you too much? We shall instruct those who remain here to take good care of them." I felt unbridled desire to see new places and to meet new people. While the first arrangements were being made for the pilgrimage I was in great doubt: shall I be invited to go or not? Tēcikar's words removed that doubt and filled me with joyful anticipation. I hastened to assure Tēcikar: "My father won't have any objections."

However, when I informed father about the trip he was somewhat disturbed. It was just at that time that a train-connection was newly established with Maturai. On our way we too would make part of the journey on that train. My father would never go by train. It was therefore not possible to invite him to join the pilgrimage. Such being the case, it was inevitable that he would stay behind in Tiruvāvaṭuturai.

He was annoyed and saddened that he would have to part with me. "It is because of your status here that I am treated with civility and affection. Have I any status on my own once you're gone?" he said. "That's not at all so," I said trying to pacify him. "Suitable persons will stay here in the Mutt to look after worship and other matters. They are all people who know well the rank and stand of everyone. They'll take good care of you. There's the *Kāṟupāṟu tampirāṉ* who will see to it that you lack nothing." Tēcikar, too, invited my father and spoke to him words of encouragement.

## A necklace and a shawl

Tēcikar set out for his trip with his retinue on the day previous to *Taip Pūcam*. *Brahmotsavam* was being celebrated at that time in Tiruviṭaimarutūr. He went there and took part in the car festival of that day and brought it to its stand. It was there that he gave me a canvas bag, a carpet, with a silk pillow for my use during the trip.

Then he made me come and sit near him; he said, "We may have to trouble you at all places where we stop during our tour. There will be quite a number of distinguished visitors who will also be fond of Tamil literature. It will be your task to delight them with your readings of Tamil poetry." "It will be an honour," I replied.

At his bidding a *tampirāṉ* brought at once a necklace of *Kaurīcaṅkara rudrākṣa* beads and put it round my neck, as well as a costly shawl which he wrapped round me. I stood transfixed with absolute delight; my hair stood on end. Tēcikar then said, "Like this you may please go to Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai and take leave of your father. We shall then start together."

These gifts were signals of the many honours I would receive in the course of the pilgrimage. I understood that Tēcikar's purpose in sending me to Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai to take leave of father a second time was to show him the gift I had received and thus be duly pleased. My parents have showed an uncommon joy when on reaching Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai I displayed the *kaṇṭi* and the shawl.

I took leave of them again and returned to Tiruviṭaimarutūr. Tēcikar set out along with his retinue. Two carriages were reserved for me and the other Brahmins, and two Brahmin lads were appointed to cook for us. We joined Tēcikar's followers, and so the trip started.

## The distinguished visitors *en route*

On our way we stopped at Ālaṅkuṭi, proceeded to a place called Mullaivāyal, spent the night there, and reached Maṉṉārkuṭi next morning. From time to time, the local worthies, informed about Tēcikar's procession, appeared to pay their respects. In Maṉṉārkuṭi Tēcikar stayed in a choultry festively adorned on his behalf. The local deputy collector, a *rāyar*, appeared and enquired whether charity and other things were all right. Not only Śaivites but members of other sects, too, as well as various Government officials, aware of Tēcikar's importance, came to see him and talk to him.

Vēṅkaṭa Rao, who was the munsif of Maṉṉārkuṭi and a friend of my father, came to see Tēcikar, too. He was the man who, when he was at Kumpakōṇam, tried to persuade my father that it was no use to study Tamil, that I should instead study English. When he saw me at the side of Tēcikar, he said to Tēcikar with real joy, "I know this young man well. Since childhood he wished nothing but to study Tamil. Please take good care of him."

The gentlemen who came to see Tēcikar talked to him of all possible things. In between I used to recite Tamil poetry and also explain it. I would never forget to recite those poems of Śrī Piḷḷai and Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai which they had composed specifically in praise of Tēcikar.

## Earrings and a ring

During our stay at Maṉṉārkuṭi, Tēcikar made me take off my old earrings, and issued an order to a person called Kastūri Aiyaṅkār that I should be adorned with a new pair set with rubies and with an ornamental fretted design all round—they must have cost over fifty rupees. But there were only tiny holes in my ears made by old earrings. It was terribly painful when these new big earrings were inserted into them. I thought, 'Amazing how women are willing to suffer for the sake of the joy of wearing various jewels!' Although blood was dripping from my ears, Aiyaṅkār inserted the new earrings without pardon. And although I said, that I would have them later, he didn't leave me, and inserted them mercilessly at once.

On our way from Maṉṉārkuṭi, at Paṭṭukkōṭṭai, Tēcikar presented me with a ring, to shine on one of my fingers. We stopped then for some days at Tirupperuntuṟai. Cuppiramaṇiyat Tampirāṉ, the temple superintendent there, had made splendid arrangements for Tēcikar's visit, and looked after us with great care.

### Poṉṉaṅkāl

When we set out from there, Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar's palanquin moved on somewhat faster along the route. We remained behind. After having covered a little distance, we saw that Tēcikar stopped in the thick spreading shade of a lot of trees standing in the sands of a creek. He was surrounded by a large group of distinguished gentlemen. They had spread next to him on a large salver fruits of many varieties, betel, areca-nut, candy and other things; on another silver plate there was a heap of money.

As we descended there and approached Tēcikar, he pointed out some of these gentlemen to us and said: "These are the descendants of Amuta Kavirāyar, who had composed *Orutuṟaikkōvai* in honour of Raghunatha Sethupati of Irāmanātapuram and received for it four hundred golden lemon fruits as prize. And this spot is the village given by the Raja Sethupati to Amuta Kavirāyar for that *kōvai*, and named *Poṉṉaṅkāl* — The Golden Creek. These people are now well off blessed by Lakshmi — Goddess of wealth."

Since I was during the whole trip always at the side of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar I had plenty of opportunities to observe his marvellous character. From time to time he would tell jokes and cheer up everyone. At various places he would take up the histories of sacred places, or speak about some past events. Often he would enquire about food and other amenities and comforts so that no one would suffer any want.

Every day was thus spent in joy and pleasure. The mind was beautifully occupied with seeing ever new places and ever new people. I felt like a fresh person, a new man, due to the interesting, attractive sights on the route, to the affectionate words of Tēcikar filled with kindness—and to the honours bestowed upon me, the *kaṇṭi*, the shawl, the earrings, the ring. I was exhilarated, I blossomed with enthusiasm.

# Chapter 73

## 'I am the example'

Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and his retinue went via Eḻuporkōṭṭai to Kāḷaiyār Kōyil and other sacred places where we had darshan, and proceeded to Tiruppūvaṉam near Maturai, where he stopped. During my time as a student of Śrī Piḷḷai and when I read the *Tēvāram* and the *talapurāṇams* I gathered from them information about many Śaiva shrines. Śrī Piḷḷai and all who were associated with him loved to visit holy places of Śaivism. As I was one of them, I was used to that, and when from time to time I had the opportunity to visit a Śaiva temple, I would eagerly enquire about things unknown to me before, and try to remember them all.

### Entry to the Pāṇṭiya country

As we stepped out of the limits of the Cōḻa territory and set foot in the Pāṇṭiya country, Tēcikar said to me, "You have seen only the Cōḻa country so far. Now you're going to see the fertile Pāṇṭiya region." As he said so, there was a note of enthusiasm in his voice. That was natural, wasn't it, since he was now returning to his own native Pāṇṭināṭu.

By reading repeatedly the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*, and even lecturing on it, I was quite familiar with the greatness of the territory of the Pāṇṭiya country. When I heard that we had just reached its border I felt quite elated. My eyes enjoyed greatly the view of the river Vaikai and of the temple at Tiruppūvaṉam. I had a darshan of the god on whose cheek was left a mark of the kiss given to him by the maiden Poṉṉaṉaiyāḷ of the *Kaṇikai* sect. I felt a rising desire to see the grand temple of Maturai as soon as possible.

While Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar was camping at Tiruppūvaṉam, the prominent citizens of Maturai as well as the Ceṭṭiyārs who had undertaken the renovation of the Maturai temple came there to pay their respects to him.

### Going to Maturai

Tēcikar then set out from there and on a certain morning reached the outskirts of Maturai, where he put up with his retinue in the temple to the west of the Vaṇṭiyūr temple-tank. There, a man called Ātimūlam Piḷḷai had everything magnificently embellished, conducted many kinds of worship with precision and distinction, including a splendid *pūjai* for Maheśvara, and arranged for two rich feedings of innumerable beggars and poor people. He was a big contractor; but also of supremely charitable disposition; filled with devotion to Śiva and the guru; as an expression of the fact that the people of Maturai loved him dearly, they named a street of their town Ātimūlam Piḷḷai Street.

Next morning, the chief secretary of the Collector's office of the City of Maturai, a very dignified person called Vēṅkaṭacāmi Nāyuṭu, came along with a representative body of citizens, to invite Tēcikar to enter the town with all due honours. A choultry on the Southern bank of the river Vaikai had been prepared for his reception. The entire area was decorated with pavillions and sheds, spreading for a great distance around it.

Rice and other foodstuffs for feeding thousands and thousands of people came in wagon-loads from Tiruvāvaṭuturai and were stored in large heaps. The coconut groves that grew thick on both banks of the Vaikai, the expanse of sand in the river-bed, and the stream of water meandering through it—all this was delightful to our sight.

## The arrival of prominent men

Tēcikar had invited many prominent people to come and talk to him: Sir T. Muttucāmi Aiyar, a judge of the Small Causes Court; Judge Muttucāmi Ceṭṭiyār; Deputy Collector Cūriyamūrttiyā Piḷḷai; Tirumaṅkalam Munsif Kiruṣṇacāmi Rao who was then the Diwan of Tiruvanantapuram and others. The fame of Muttucāmi Aiyar spread then far and wide. When I saw him there for the first time, I gazed in amazement at his totally unassuming, almost insignificant figure, and heard his soft and gentle speech.

Śrī Namacivāya Tēcikar, who was the Younger Head of the monastery at Kalliṭaikkuricci came, too. Makā Vaittiyanātaiyar came with his brother from Tiruvaiyāru and stayed with Tēcikar. When they came, Tēcikar pointed to me and said, "Watch him well. He must be with us during the entire pilgrimage." I was enthusiastic that they had come.

## The splendour of the dedication ceremony

Myriads came from all over the country to witness the *Makākumpāpiṣēkam* — The Great Dedication Ceremony. Zamindars, heads of estates, wealthy members of the gentry came from all over India, from Kāśī to Kanyākumari, accompanied by members of their retinue. Every one of note in Tamilnadu had gathered in the city. Most of them came for a sight of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. During such audiences I was dutifully at his side, engaged in reciting poetry.

The dedication ceremony was performed at the proper time with splendour. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar entered the temple to witness the service, and I accompanied him. Among all those crowds, however, I could not view that truly fine piece of architecture and appreciate it. It was then that we met for the first time Maṇi Aiyar. It was he who arranged under his personal supervision for Tēcikar and his party to witness the sacred ceremonies without any discomfort. In the few minutes he was with us, we felt how energetic and active he was, how helpful too, and how great was the regard people had for him.

## Maṇi Aiyar

After the conclusion of the ceremonies, Tēcikar returned to his quarters. From the moment he set eyes on Maṇi Aiyar, he felt a great desire to meet him and talk to him at least for a while. So he chose a proper person to send to him with his message: "We are very eager to meet Your Honour and cultivate your acquaintance. We are unable to come to where you are. Every minute the thought is uppermost in our mind that we must manage to see you." As soon as he heard this, he sent word saying, "We too are eager to meet you," informed us in advance of his visit, and came to Tēcikar's quarters at the appointed time. A number of people had already assembled there in the hope to see and hear that man of genius. Tēcikar sent his representative to receive him when he came, welcomed him, offered him a seat, and began to talk to him.

When Maṇi Aiyar, armed with the excellence of intellect, talked to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, an outstanding connaisseur, their speech flourished and overflowed with delight. The people gathered there were all eyes and all ears, to see them and to listen to what they were saying, and to enjoy. Maṇi Aiyar's manner was bold and decisive, and his terse words revealed his courage and his conviction that truth will prevail. Tēcikar praised the great man with words that were very sweet and gentle. He pleased him greatly with quotations of Sanskrit verses and Tamil poems. Maṇi Aiyar, who was a man knowing how to appreciate the taste of literature, enjoyed the conversation very much.

## Vēṭanāyakam Piḷḷai's stanza

I was awaiting the opportunity to recite some poem in that large gathering and in the presence of Maṇi Aiyar who represented so beautifully the very soul of Maturai. Vēṇuvaṉaliṅkat Tampirāṉ who was seated near me indeed created that opportunity. He said, with a glance in my direction, "Mr. Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai, the munsif of Māyūram, has composed a number of poems in praise of His Holiness." As soon as Maṇi Aiyar said, "By all means, let us hear those poems", I grabbed my opportunity, and recited quite a number of pieces written by Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai, explaining their meaning as well as the occasions which inspired them. Knowing that I shall hardly ever again see such a gathering, I grew more and more eloquent as I went on. The last poem I chose was,

*taṭaiyil koṭaiccup piramaṇi yaiyaniṟ cārntavarkoḷ*
*koṭaiyai avarcola vēṇṭuṅ kolōvavar kuṭcicolum*
*iṭaicoluṅ kaṇṭamuṅkātuñ columiṟu māppuṭaiya*
*naṭaicoluṅ kaiyiṟ kuṭaicolum vēṟeṉṉa nāṉ colvatē*

"What need, O Cupramaṇya, do they have, those who've received
benefits at thy bounteous hands, to speak
of gifts which thou hast given them without a pause?
Do not their throats now speak, and ears?
Do not their waists and their well-fed stomachs sing?
Their clothes, as they walk, proud, around,
and the umbrellas in their hands?
What else to say? Why should I make more sounds?"

I dwelt at length on the meaning of this stanza and then continued: "This poem enumerates the different kinds of gifts His Holiness makes. There are many people who have received one kind or another of these. I, however, am an example of one who has obtained *all* of those gifts in combination. I have been eating the food the Mutt has provided for me for many years. What I wear round my waist, as well as the clothes put away in my chest, are all the gifts of His Holiness. The necklace *kaurīcaṅkara kaṇṭi* worn round my neck is a gift from him. The earrings that adorn my ears, as well as the ring shining on my finger have I received from him. Thus my stomach, my waist, my throat, my ears and my hands all speak of the generosity of His Holiness. Only two items are lacking which have been listed in Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai's poem: the self-important strut, and the umbrella in my hand; and I do not wish to possess them!" The moment I finished, the audience burst into loud cheers of approval. Many were amazed that a Christian gentleman had paid such a homage to Tēcikar. I felt as if I had accomplished some great feat, and sat down satisfied.

I saw the smile in Tēcikar's face as he listened to my speech, and I knew it was a sign of his approval. I thought then that that smile expressed simply the measure of his pleasure. It was only later that I was given to understand that it signified something else, and that he was mentally noting down my pronouncement that I did not have either an umbrella or a self-important manner of walking.

Maṇi Aiyar took his leave and departed. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar stayed a few more days. Then he asked me, Makā Vaittiyanātaiyar and a few others to go to Tirunelvēli by train, telling us that he would cover the distance by road. Thus we indeed went to Tirunelvēli as he ordered.

## Chapter 74

## The first book I edited

In Tirunelvēli there is a Mutt which belongs to Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai, situated in the West Car Street. Its name is *Īcāṉa maṭam*. When I, Makā Vaiṭṭiyanātaiyar, and the rest came there from Maturai, the Head of the monastery was a *tampirāṉ* called Cāminata Tampirāṉ, and he was in complete authority concerning everything. We stayed in his care and waited for the arrival of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar.

### Dispute

On his route, Tēcikar visited many holy places of Śiva, and finally reached Tirunelvēli. Many rich men, persons of importance and scholars of Pāṇṭya country came to see him, bringing various gifts and oblations. The *vittuvāṉs* arrived with songs which they had newly composed in his honour. Irāmacāmi Kavirāyar and a few others came from Ceṟṟūr; Irājavallipuram Aḻakiya Cokkanata Piḷḷai arrived, too, as well as Tēvarāja Pārati from Āḻvār Tirunakari.

Tēvarāja Pārati recited some of his poems. However, I had a few objections concerning some points in his compositions, and I expressed them. He gave satisfactory answers to all my questions. Tēcikar had never before seen me speaking with such audacity to any other scholar before, and when we were alone he called me and said to me: "It was quite proper that you raised some objections. To reach a conclusion by means of discussion is in good tradition. There is one kind of scholar designated as critical disputant. If a discussion is conducted without wrangling and following the rules of propriety, those who listen will enjoy and, in addition, the erudition and the skills of both discussants will become apparent. This custom is very common in Sanskrit culture." I had had some doubts whether my objections and my criticism had been wrong; by what he said these doubts were dispelled.

## Kalliṭaikkuṟicci

Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and his retinue then went to Kalliṭaikkuṟicci, on the invitation of the Junior Head Namacivāya Tēcikar. A new hall of audience was raised there in view of his coming. Next to the Mutt stood a lovely Śiva shrine, similar to that of Tiruvāvaṭuturai. The holy name of the Lord is Kaṇva Caṅkaraṉ. As at Tiruvāvaṭuturai, many *ōtuvārs*, officials and servants, all very accomplished, are attached to the Mutt and the temple. Most of the Brahmins living in the big *akkirakārams* of that place were very rich. All of them were rather fond of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. Informed about his arrival, they came in multitudes to welcome him with many different kinds of fruits.

I looked and I watched, and I was most of the time amazed. Everyone would quite naturally be charmed by the beautiful scenery, by the faith of the people, by the greatness of the *vittuvāṉs*. I remembered that Tēcikar used to praise Kalliṭaikkuṟicci frequently. He used to live there for many years while bearing the office of the Junior Head. It became then clear to me that the place indeed did deserve the high praise, and that his praise was due to his affection for it.

Vēṇuvaṉaliṅkat Tampirāṉ who accompanied us had selected an auspicious day for Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar's festive entrance into the Cevantipuram Mutt. He was somewhat worried that Tēcikar might linger on in Kalliṭaikkuṟicci, his old station, and therefore he insisted on setting out for Cevantipuram as soon as possible. I knew that however long we would stay at Kalliṭaikkuṟicci we would greatly enjoy it. But the desire to see every new places made me impatient and I, too, thought, 'Let Tēcikar start as soon as possible.'

## Cevantipuram

Tēcikar reached Cevantipuram on the auspicious day selected ahead, and put up at the Mutt. Cevantipuram was the most important among the eight villages donated by Cevantiyappa Nāyakkar, a high official of the Nāyakka rulers of the Pāṇṭiya kingdom. It contained a temple which he had established, known as Cevanticuvaram.

Vēṇuvaṉaliṅkat Tampirāṉ had named the newly erected building of the Mutt 'Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcika Vilācam', installed an image of Śrī Tēcikar in it, and arranged for its regular worship. The fact that one day Tēcikar so kindly arrived in person gave him unbounded joy. The event was celebrated as a large-scale festival.

Several scholars had composed a number of stanzas celebrating the beautiful new monastery. That night, as soon as the festive entrance into the Mutt was finished, after about two in the morning, I read out all these poems in the gathering of many *vittuvāṉs* and distinguished guests, and in Tēcikar's presence. A few poets took up their own compositions, stressing their excellence. When the whole reading was over, it was dawn of the next day. Altogether eighty-six poems were read, composed by Makā Vaittiyanātaiyar, his brother, and others. I had composed eight stanzas.

## Editing the book

Vēṇuvaṉaliṅkat Tampirāṉ expressed the wish to have all those poems appear in print. Many of the others suggested that while this was being arranged other verses composed in praise of Vēṇuvaṉaliṅka Vilācam Hall in Tiruvāvaṭuturai should be printed along. So, both sets of verses and a few others were brought out in print as a booklet by Muttamiḻākaram Press in Tirunelvēli. It was I who had prepared and edited the little book for printing. I have in later life prepared innumerable texts as editions for press, and this collection of songs was the very first book I edited. I was at that time altogether ignorant of the principles of editing. And yet that book which I corrected and revised for printing for the first time, has a very special place in my thoughts. The title page ran thus:

> "By the grace of god Ganapati *the glory of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcika Vilācam*, composed at the instance of Vēṇuvaṉaliṅka Cuvāmikaḷ, Lord High Steward at Cevantipuram, attached to Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt of the Holy Kailāsa lineage. *The glory of Vēṇuvaṉaliṅka Vilācam*, the audience hall erected by the above-said Cuvāmikaḷ in the above-said Tiruvāvaṭuturai. Sung by many poets and revised by Āṟumuka Cuvāmikaḷ, a disciple of the above-said Mutt, and by Cāminātа Aiyar of Tiruvāvaṭuturai, son of Vēṅkaṭa Cuppa Aiyar, printed at Muttamiḻākara press, Tirunelvēli, June, 1878."

The book contained, too, a brief biography of Vēṇuvaṉaliṅkat Tampirāṉ, hymns and prayers composed by Tiruvāvaṭuturai Kumāracuvāmit Tampirāṉ, and poems by Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai composed in praise of Tēcikar. It was necessary to add a page of Errata. It came all to 32 pages.

When the book came fresh from the press, we all admired it for its beauty. The name of Āṟumukat Tampirāṉ had been included only for the sake of formality; as he had left all the work of editing to be done by me, I went into raptures at the mere sight of the book which I had completely edited. With the joy that it was a book which I had prepared for print as well as a book containing my poems, there was yet another matter I felt proud about: the section of the poems celebrating the Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcika Vilācam contained thirteen stanzas made by Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār. In one of them he praised me.

*tuṉṉuṟupē rilakkaṇamu milakkiyamu mīṉāṭci cuntarappēr*
*maṉṉuṟunā valarperumā ṉiṭaiyuṇarntel lānalamum vāyntaṉṉōṉpōṟ*
*paṉṉukavi colcāmi nātamaṟai yōṉiyaṟcaṇ pakakkuṟ ṟāla*
*meṉṉumuyar peyarpuṉainta kavirājaṉ mutaṟpalaru miyampi yētta*

Cāmināta, the Brahmin,
Who studied under
The great poet by name of
Mīṉāṭcicuntaram
Many great grammars and literature,
Blessed with
All good things in life
And like him capable of
Composing many poems, and
The kavirājaṉ, by name
Caṇpakakkuṟṟālam and others
Praised composing poems.

### Pāpanācam

Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar stayed at Cevantipuram for four months. Every morning, he would go to Pāpanācam which was situated in the vicinity, had a bath in the river Tāmiraparṇi, and worshipped Śrī Ulakammai and Śrī Kaliyāṇacuntarēcuvarar. We would accompany him. That *sthalam* situated at the foot of Potiyamalai Mountain is particularly beautiful. One is completely enchanted by the splendour of the waterfall, rippling and leaping down from the rocks, by the playful fat fish flashing like lightnings of many colours, and by the soft sweet breeze. No one is allowed to catch the fish. Hence the fish, completely unafraid, dashes playfully against the bathers.

The food-offering in the temple at Pāpanācam consists of a special *piracātam* made of rice, called oil rice and a suitable *tuvaiyal*. Tēcikar had arranged for that special *piracātam* to be served to us so that we may satisfy our healthy morning hunger. I am still thinking of what can be comparable to the delight of eating that *piracātam*, combined with feeding it to the fish circling happily around us in the crystal-clear water of the Tāmiraparṇi running fast down from the Potiya Malai.

## Chapter 75

## Two Scholars

One day two persons arrived at Cevantipuram to see Tēcikar from Puḷiyaṅkuṭi, a place which was the seat of many learned men. With them arrived in a small wooden cart with a pile of palm-leaf scrolls. They unloaded all of them in a heap on the veranda. Tēcikar was at that moment engaged in teaching us, sitting on that veranda.

The moment I saw the two gentlemen and their heap of palm-leaf scripts I thought, 'These must be some great savants! Today we'll learn many new things.'

## New decads of the *Tēvāram*

They prostrated themselves at the feet of Tēcikar, offering at his feet their gifts. One of the two was a very rich gentleman; another was called 'Teyvappulavar'. That struck me for I knew that this was a title traditionally applied to Tiruvaḷḷuvar only. I have never before heard anyone called by such lofty name. However, I found out later that the name was an abbreviation of 'Poet Teyvanāyakam'.

The palm-leaf scrolls brought in the wooden cart were placed in front of Tēcikar. He asked, "What are these?"

"They are all decads of the *Tēvāram*."

"Really? These palm-leaf scrolls seem to have been copied recently. Hasn't the *Tēvāram* appeared in print? Is it necessary to go into the trouble of making new palm-leaf copies?"

"These decads are different", said Teyvappulavar. The wealthy gentleman who had so far been sitting silently straightened up.

Tēcikar asked eagerly: "Where have you obtained these new, different decads?"

We recollected the history of the *Tēvāram*—how emperor Apayakulacēkaraṉ discovered the text with the help of Nampiyāṇṭār Nampi. That story also told us that many of the decads of the *Tēvāram* had been gnawed away by termites. Suddenly we felt excited by the possibility — very doubtful, though — that copies of those lost decads could indeed have been preserved somewhere. However, the next minute damped our excitement completely.

"These are all *Tēvāram* decads sung by Mr. Piḷḷai", announced the Poet with a solemn voice pointing proudly to the rich gentleman. That particular Mr. Piḷḷai has so far not opened his mouth. But the expression on his face was one of tremendous satisfaction and pride.

The words of the poet shocked Tēcikar profoundly. He laughed shortly, but there was genuine anger in that laughter. However, he did not give vent to it.

The two might have thought that Tēcikar's agitation and astonishment were a sign that he was eager to hear those marvellous poems. He was not at all eager, and yet he said, with calm dignity: "Well, let us hear a few stanzas."

The great man who was the author of the decads did not open his mouth even then. It was only the poet who began to recite the stanzas. After every decad, he pointed to the original poetry of the *Tēvāram* which had supposedly served as model. Measuring off every poem and every word with a yard-stick, every stanza and every word of the original model were transposed into something that was entirely tasteless.

Here and there we would try to throw an objection. While doing so, we looked meaningfully at the great man. He, however, was not in the least disturbed, and looking at his performing poet, grunted. The poet would say something in answer. The greatman would never answer our objections, leaving it to the poet.

Finally, Tēcikar was fed up and had no wish to listen anymore. His disgust at last showed itself. "It's very tiresome. One grain is sufficient as a sample of a jar full of boiled rice, isn't it? Enough is enough," he said, and made a gesture to arrest the flow of the 'poetry'. I am certain that had he let the poet go on, a further performance of those 'poems' would have perforated our ears.

Tēcikar gave a silk shawl, and a gold threaded dhoti and sent him off the very next day. Then he asked us: "Can you guess the reason for this gift?"

Even though I could guess his intentions, I said purposely: "For his efforts in having composed those *Tēvāram* decads."

"O Śiva Śiva!" exclaimed Tēcikar. "He has, after all, offered me a humble gift with courtesy, and he seems to be a gentleman. I had to reciprocate to satisfy him. But tell me, what do you think of his *Tēvāram* decads?"

"It seems to me that he is not at all their author."

"Indeed. They were composed by the 'poet' who makes the rich man dance to his tune. And that poor fellow agrees like a puppet to everything. There are people like this in this world. Why couldn't he give another name to his poetry! He dares to call it unashamedly decads of *Tēvāram!* Next he will produce another *Tiruvācakam*, another *Tirukkōvaiyār*! Doesn't he realize that it's a lie? Or, at least, a shameful impropriety?"

"Well", I said, "perhaps he will next compose another *Tirumukappācuram* which Lord Śiva himself composed as part of the eleventh *Tirumuṟai*!"

Tēcikar laughed, and we joined him.

## Kuṟṟālam sights

Tēcikar then set out with his retinue planning to witness the Āṭittavacu festival at Caṅkaranayiṉār Kōyil, and the great *Āvaṇi* festival at Tiruccentūr, and then to go to Tirupperuntuṟai. For a few days he stayed in the Mutt at Kuṟṟālam, after receiving the honours offered by persons on the way.

Since this was the first time that I visited Tirukkuṟṟālam, I was delighted enjoying its incomparable natural beauty. The purity and splendour of the famous waterfalls and the ardour of devotion and the joy of the crowds gathered there made me happy. The trees which grow there luxuriously without any disturbance, thriving for hundreds of years, and the drizzling showers serving as fertile support of these forests, lend a unique beauty to that well-known place. Kuṟṟālam alone would suffice to give greatness and fame to the District of Tiruṇelvēli. The breeze and the waters of Kuṟṟālam join to clear simultaneously the bodies and the hearts of people who come there to be purified. Even if one would live there for many many years one would never feel frustrated or bored.

## Mr. Pennington

At that time, many Englishmen stayed at Kuṟṟālam with their families to bathe in the waterfalls. The Collector of Tirunelvēli District, Mr. Pennington, was there then. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and he had known each other before. Hence, when the Collector heard about Tēcikar's arrival, he came one day to the Mutt to see him. A munshi came along with the Collector. At the wish of Tēcikar I and a few others composed some stanzas in the Collector's honour. The munshi translated and explained their meaning to the Englishman. The last lines of one of the verses composed by me ran like this:

> ". . . Mr. Pennington, sir,
> it is impossible to say
> how everyone here is glad
> that we have in Kuṟṟālam met."

## Carkkarai Pāratiyār

One morning we set out—that is I, Caṇpakak Kuṟṟālak Kavirāyar, and a few others—to have a look at the beauties of the Kuṟṟālam hills and enjoy. As we were walking through the groves on the northern fringes of the hills we heard a lovely singing. We followed the sound, and came to a pavillion; on the veranda was sitting a lone man singing with the full force of his pleasant voice. It was odd that, being quite alone there, he should sing so loudly.

As we approached him he stopped singing and asked: "Who are you?" We told him that we came there with Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and introduced ourselves. He said he was the younger brother of Vēmpattūr Piccuvaiyar, and that his name was Carkkarai Pārati.

As we were talking, someone roared from inside in an authoritarian manner: "Baleee! Why did you stop singing?" At the same moment a servant saying *"putti"* came running from inside and stared at Pāratiyār. He shivered, resumed the tempo, and began singing again.

We didn't understand a bit. "Come to the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt of this place. We'll be able to talk there", we said. "His Holiness will be glad to meet you." Since he was singing he could not say anything, but expressed his consent by moving his head. We left.

That evening Carkkarai Pāratiyār came to the Mutt and saw Tēcikar. When we heard his story we felt indeed very sorry for him. He has been for a few months in the employment of a local Zamindar. While the Zamindar was playing cards inside the pavillion with a very close friend, Pārati was supposed to sit outside on the veranda and sing. Since the person inside—the partner in the game—was a woman, Pārati was not allowed to come in. What we heard was the Zamindar's arrogant voice coming from inside.

We felt very sorry for the poor fellow. "Well" he said, "I have to beat his rhythm for a few handfulls of rice." He then spoke with Tēcikar and sang many lovely stanzas and *kīrttaṉams*. He had equal command over music and literature, and Tēcikar who enjoyed both, loved his singing. He presented the poor *vittuvāṉ* with a shawl of golden thread worth fifteen rupees.

Pāratiyār did not at all expect such presentation. "For such generosity and a patron like this I'd be willing to slave my whole life", he exclaimed. "We shall welcome you at Tiruvāvaṭuturai any time", answered Tēcikar.

"I have been bound to rude fellows who don't know the value"said the man, "but one should have the good fortune. If I can, I'll certainly come." He took leave with eyes full of tears.

## Chapter 76

# Visiting Holy Places

After having stayed for a few days in Tirukkurrālam, Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar resumed his pilgrimage in order to inspect every one of the villages belonging to the main Mutt. These villages which had been placed under supervision of Vēṇuvaṉaliṅkat Tampirāṉ represented effectively the chief support of the life of Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt. One of those places used to be called Kampaṉēri Putukkuṭi. Tēcikar who had purchased it gave it a new name in memory of his guru: Ampalavāṇa Tēcikapuram. Tēcikar remained there for one day.

### 'Silver caps did not stay'

The then Head of the Tiruppaṉantāḷ Kāci Mutt, Śrī Rāmaliṅkat Tampirāṉ, had great and genuine affection for Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. When he was informed about Tēcikar's pilgrimage, he arranged for a special train so that he could join Tēcikar's trip at least for a few days, came by way of Tirunelvēli to Cevantipuram, saw Tēcikar, and joined the company. The visit of Kampaṉēri Putukkuṭi prompted him to lavish praise. That village was a very large one. When Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar arrived with his retinue it changed into a big town.

Tēcikar got from Makā Vaittiyanātaiyar and his elder brother Irāmacāmi Aiyar the necklaces of *rudrākṣa* beads they were wearing and had them fixed with gold caps. In the string of *rudrākṣa* presented to me at Tiruviṭaimarutūr, the caps were, too of gold-gilt silver. He had them substituted for caps of real gold. Irāmacāmi Aiyar made then a pun with the word *taṅku* which means "to stay" as well as "gold"; one and the same sentence means "Silver did not stay" and also, "Silver caps became gold caps." Everyone was amused.

### Caṅkara Nayiṉār Kōyil

According to an arrangement made ahead, Tēcikar went to witness the temple festival called Āṭittavacu at Caṅkara Nayiṉār Kōyil. The temple of Caṅkara Nayiṉār enjoys the same degree of fame as the Vaittīcuvaraṉ Kōyil in the Cōḻa country. I have truly enjoyed my visit to the temple, to worship the icon of Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa which combines in one Lord Śiva and Viṣṇu — Tirumāl. I saw many devotees there who came and got cured by the miraculous properties of the earth drawn from the ant-hill of that temple. I was thrilled by the sight of Śrī Kōmuttiyammai who is worshipped there. The festival in June-July of every year is celebrated there in memory of the greatness of the penance performed by the particular goddess for the sake of the Lord. That is why the annual festival is known as Āṭittavacu—that is, 'The Penance of June-July'.

### Karivalamvanta Nallūr

We stayed in Caṅkara Nayiṉār Kōyil for one week and then set out for Tiruccentūr in order to witness the Āvaṇi Festival. *En route* we stopped for a day at Karivalamvanta Nallūr. Students who begin with the reading of Tamil literature are not unaware of that particular *sthalam*. Three minor classics are dedicated to it — *Karuvai Patiṟṟuppattantāti*, *Karuvai Kalitturaiyantāti* and *Karuvai Veṇpā Antāti*, all composed by Varatuṅka Rāma Pāṇṭiyar. Karuvai is just another name of Karivalamvanta Nallūr.

As we were approaching that place I recalled the *antāti* poems which I had studied earlier. When I was taught those *antāti* texts by my Master, I studied them by listening, so to say, "by ear". As I listened to him explaining matters pertaining to the *sthalam* I fabricated in my imagination the vision of a particular temple. When I *saw* the temple with my own eyes, a number of things which had till then remained unclear became suddenly obvious. Merely listening to the explanation of the meaning of the stanzas was necessarily insufficient; when my eyes fell on the idol of the Pālvaṇṇa Nātar—Lord of Milky Hue, everything became quite clear. I also admired the ancient thorny *kāḷā* shrub which lent its shade to the icon of the Lord.

With a few friends I set out to explore the town which had been the seat of a famous Tamil poet, king and devotee—Varatuṅka Rāma Pāṇṭiyaṉ. It was a delightful experience. While walking around I saw a person coming in the opposite direction in the middle of the street, accompanied by a few very young monks. As soon as he saw me he greeted me very politely with folded palms. I did not recognize him as someone I should know.

He had a handsome turban round his head, earrings in his ears and rings on his fingers. Round his waist was tied a gold threaded waist-cloth. I saw all this and thought, 'I cannot remember having seen this exalted gentleman before.' I said, "I don't think we've met before." I said it politely, and he answered, politely, "I was a humble student of you". Even then I couldn't recognize him. "What is your name?" "I am Cokkaliṅkam; haven't I listened to your classes at Tiruvāvaṭuturai?"

"Cokkaliṅkat Tampirāṉ? I haven't recognized you!" I stood there amazed.

"I have changed my clothes; I am Cokkaliṅkam Piḷḷai now."

"Are you all right? You had grown your hair two span long! Why was this transformation necessary?"

"While I stayed in Tiruvāvaṭuturai, I was in the company of monks. I had an enormous appetite for study. You were giving the classes. His Holiness offered most kindly his protection. For some reason or other I came back here. Old ties were renewed. My family wished me to start the life of a family-man, to take up the family job. I too began to desire it. I am just a human being, am I not? Would I have become a great scholar—or a wise man—simply by wearing the ochre robe? So, I got married. I have established a kind of school here and I teach. The villagers support me generously. It has all happened by the grace of your Mutt there."

He took leave of me. When we returned to Tēcikar we told him about Cokkaliṅkam Piḷḷai. He smiled with utmost kindness and said, "His was an excellent decision. Incomparably better than to don the robe of an ascetic and then do things which are unworthy of one."

## Tiruccentūr

Having left Karivalamvanta Nallūr we reached Tiruccentūr via Āḻvār Tirunakari and some other towns. Many are the ceremonies performed for the Lord of Centil on behalf of the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt. Hence the Mutt has there a number of establishments. We took part in the great *Āvaṇi* festival there. Tēcikar arranged for the feeding of Brahmins, and conducted a number of ceremonies in the worship of Maheśvara.

The sight of the magnificent sea-shore temple of The Lord of Centil is unforgettable. There was a tremendous crowd gathered in the worship of the god. Tiruccentūr is indeed one of those holy places which take care that the flame of devotion does not disappear from this world. This divine *sthalam* is a place where one can witness many miracles happening, thanks to the grace of god Murukaṉ who is the Lord of Kaliyukam.

## *Kantar Kaliveṇpā*

In the Tiruppaṉantāḷ Mutt, administered by Irāmaliṅkat Tampirāṉ, the monk who was accompanying us, they worship Kumarakurupara Suvāmikaḷ as their founder. As a child, that spiritual giant was numb till the age of five; having come to Centil, he was granted the gift of speech by the grace of The Lord of Centil. At that time he composed his first *pirapantam* in praise of this god, entitled *Kantar kaliveṇpā*. There are many in Tamilnadu who, convinced that it is an utterance of the Holy Grace itself, recite it daily as their prayerful worship. I read it repeatedly, and always with pleasure. While staying at Tiruccentūr I recited it often. Irāmaliṅkat Tampirāṉ would either read or listen to this poem, composed by the spiritual ancestor of his monastery, very frequently and with great enthusiasm. In the final section of *Kantar kaliveṇpā*, its poet, Kumarakuruparar, prays ardently for the gift of the four poetic inspiration. I used to read that section again and again, praising The Lord of Centil with genuine devotion. My heart, too, burnt with the desire to possess the gift of poetry.

### My decision

While in Tiruccentūr, Tēcikar called me and Makā Vaittiyanātaiyar and told us to return to our native villages, and then after a few days to rejoin him at Tirupperuntuṟai. We set out. Irāmaliṅkat Tampirāṉ took leave, too, and left for Tiruppaṉantāḷ. I came to Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai with a new resolve: with the grace of The Lord of Centil, to train myself in future with diligence in composing poetry.

## Chapter 77

## Occasional poems

Kumāracāmit Tampirāṉ was the Junior Steward at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai. He effected certain improvements in the Mutt during Tēcikar's absence on the pilgrimage. The temple, the Mutt and the parks got a new look due to his great care.

A few weeks went by in Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai since I had returned from Tirunelvēli. During that time I spent delightful hours with Kumāracāmit Tampirāṉ in discussing matters related to Tamil. I told him, too, about incidents which had happened during the tour, and about the scholars I had met.

In agreement with my decision reached at Tiruccentūr, I composed each day a poem related to Śrī Kōmuttīcuvarar. Kumāracāmit Tampirāṉ listened to them with pleasure. The other monks, too, were impressed: Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār used to come from Kumpakōṇam for the week-ends. The two days that he stayed were spent, too, in discussing Tamil.

### A poem with a question

Kumāracāmit Tampirāṉ planned the construction of a building close to the tank in the South Street, and made the necessary arrangements. The workers were digging exceptionally deep trenches for the foundations. When Tampirāṉ went there to supervise the work I went with him. An old man was standing there overseeing the work in progress. He was just skin and bone and seemed to have some difficulty even to stand straight. When I saw him I wondered whether he was dead or alive. I was astonished how he could extract any work from the labourers at all. Suddenly the air shook with a threatening roar. I was completely stunned when I realized that such a sound issued from such a body. I peered at him again, asking myself in doubt, 'Was it he that just roared?' Before I could be sure, another shout, even stronger and more frightening than before, burst forth from that person. I turned to the Tampirāṉ and asked,

> "Could sounds like that bellow
> issue from such fellow?"

As at that time composing verses absorbed all my attention, the question shaped itself into a line of poetry. Tampirāṉ laughed in reply and said, "Appearances are deceptive." He then added, "Why don't you compose a quatrain using your question as the concluding line?" When I did it, he was pleased with the result.

### 'If he stops they move'

It was then about eleven o'clock. Both of us started for the Kāvēri for a bath. On the way he remarked, "We could have bathed in the tank instead. Going to the river costs time. Before I come back, work will stand still."

I said, "It seems that if you walk away, they stop; and if you stand there, they move", and I recited a stanza:

> *kaṉṟālmuṉ viḷaveṟintakaṇṇaṉ mikavañcavarum kaṭuvayiṉṟu*
> *maṉṟāṭa luvantatiruk kōmutti vāṇarpaṇi vaḻuvātāṟṟum*
> *kuṉṟāta pukaḻkkumara cāmimuṉi varaṉmāṭam kuyiṟṟavaṉṉāṉ*
> *niṉṟālav vēlainaṭan tiṭumaṉaiyā ṉaṭappiṉatu niṟkun tānē*
>
> Kumāracāmi Muṉi
> Of undeclining fame
> Serving Lord Tirukkōmutti
> Who danced happily
> Gulfing the poison,
> Which even Kaṇṇaṉ
> Who threw the calf before
> Over the *vilva* tree,
> Dreaded;
> If he stands
> They move and the work will go on
> And if he moves
> They stop.

Tampirāṉ exclaimed, "It seems that today you're possessed by the ecstasy of poetic inspiration!" He made me repeat the stanza again and again, and listened with delight.

### Song of the Water-springs

We reached the bathing ghats of the Kāvēri. On the southern bank stood a magnificent, high *maruta* tree, spreading its branches over the shore and bestowing to the place pleasant shade. We sat down on the sand in the shade at its stem. The deep, cool shade was particularly delightful in the midday heat.

Since there was no running water in the Kāvēri, several separate water-springs were dug specially for bath on such an occasion. In order to enable the Head of the Mutt to have a full immersion in water while bathing, a canal was dug up with running water, and fenced off on all four sides. West of it had been dug a large spring fenced off, too, for all other monks to bathe; and east of it there was another large spring as a bathing facility for all others—Śaiva devotees, pilgrims, everyone else. A person was specifically appointed to take care of and guard these water resources; his name was Poṉṉuppiḷḷai.

He was expected to draw used water out of the ponds, sweep them of rubbish and keep them clean, to supervise who was supposed to bathe in which particular pool, to keep those others away, and to watch over the pools in general. He had a few men to assist him.

When he saw us sitting in the shade of the *maruta* tree he approached us, prostrated himself in front of Kumāracāmit Tampirāṉ, and was standing there waiting. "Everything all right?" asked the monk. "Everything fine, sir. There's plenty of water in the pool. You can kindly take your bath, sir."

That watchman was very fierce. Whenever an unauthorized person would approach the pools he would beat them on their feet. If someone would come near the water-resources with his or her brass vessel, he would snatch it and throw it far away. If it happened to be a mud vessel he would break it. Women in particular were terrified of him. He would all the time be distorted with an angry expression; and his words were always fierce and sharp. It was his firm conviction that, that was exactly the way to do his job properly. While the shade and the pools were a source of delight at the place, his face, on the contrary, assisted rather the raging fury of the heat.

Tampirāṉ asked me, "Do you know this man?" "Only too well", I said. The man went away to see to his job. "He's permanently angry. I've never seen even a sign of joy or pleasure on his face. Do you think you could make him laugh?" asked the monk. "Let me see", I said, and thought of a stanza describing that very particular person. Some roughness of his rough and rigid personality crept into my poem—a particular type of stanza called *tiripu*. When I finished it I showed it to the Tampirāṉ.

*maruta marattu niḻalūṭu veḷḷai maṇaliruppum*
*poruta marappoṉṉup piḷḷaiveṅ kāval purintuñaṟṟum*
*virutama raṟputa vūṟṟu ṭalumnitam mēvap peṟṟāl*
*karuta marakka ṇaramāta rōṭiruk kaiyiṉaiyē*

If one gets
The sandy seat
Under the shade of *Maruta* tree
And a daily bath
In the wonderful spring
Guarded strongly by Poṉṉuppiḷḷai
With his fighting and roaring voice,
One will not think greatly
Living with divine damsels
With sharp eyes like files.

Tampirāṉ said amidst laughter, "It seems that something of the hero's (hero of the poem) character has invaded your poem!" Then he called Poṉṉuppiḷḷai and told him: "Listen! He has composed a stanza celebrating you and your work!" I recited quickly my stanza, pronouncing with strong emphasis just his name, Poṉṉupiḷḷai. He could hardly understand anything else. But as soon as his name fell on his ears a smile appeared on his face, perhaps even without him realizing it. "Beautiful! What a rare thing!" exclaimed the monk laughing. I said: "What was rare? My song? His smile?" But I had no doubts whatsoever.

"Sir may take his bath in that one pool. It's filled with fresh water", said the guardian of the waters pointing at me.

"That's the prize graciously bestowed by the poem's hero", said the monk.

## Railway song

Kumāracāmit Tampirāṉ planted flowering shrubs of many kinds in the garden on the four sides of the southern tank and sent large quantities of fragrant herbs and leaves to the temples nearby; he also would send them for my father's use in daily worship.

Tampirāṉ wanted in particular to adorn the icon of Śrī Naṭarāja of Citamparam with these leaves and herbs. One day he took a large basket, packed it with the fragrent herbs and leaves, and set out for Citamparam, taking me and a few monks along. It was twelve at noon when we boarded the train. As trains had been newly introduced, boarding a train was a thrilling experience. There was not a large crowd. More than two persons for a wagon was a rarity. In a short while we spread ourselves in separate carriages according to our wish and rested. Later we met together at one place and talked. Since we were all companions in study, we discussed a lot of funny things. All of us knew how to make poetry. So everyone composed a stanza with the railway journey as the theme. As there were manifold approaches to that one single experience, the stanzas were quite enjoyable. I might have composed two or three poems. I recollect now only the opening lines of one *veṇpā*:

*uṇṇalām tūcum uṭukkalām nittiraiyum*
*paṇṇalām nūlkaḷ paṭikkalām. . . .*

"Here you may eat or dress as you please,
here you may sleep or read at your ease. . ."

## A phantasy

We reached Citamparam in the afternoon, and in the evening went to the temple and had darshan of Śrī Naṭarāja. Kumāracāmit Tampirāṉ handed over the fragrant herbs and leaves to a *dīkṣitar* and asked him to use them for the icon's adornment. The priest decorated the lovely figure of Naṭarāja with all of them and performed the light-ritual. He said, "The holy body of the Lord is all fresh and green now like the figure of Umādevī." Kumāracāmit Tampirāṉ was beside himself with joy. I composed a stanza suitable for that occasion. The leaves used for the decoration are called *maru* in Tamil, and this word signifies also "fragrance".

By using the two meanings of that one word, I produced a kind of phantasy. My stanza expressed the following thought: "The Lord who dwells in the sacred Citamparam has the holy shape of Space. The sages tell us that the propriety of Space is sound, but not fragrance *(maru)*. To put them to shame, Śrī Kumāracāmit Tampirān̲ has bestowed upon Lord Śiva's frame the gift of *maru* (the leaves/fragrance)."

*tiruven̲r̲um nin̲r̲oḷirum tur̲aicaiyir̲cup piramaṇiya tēvar̲ kan̲pir̲*
*poruven̲r̲u min̲r̲iyoḷi ruṅkumara cāmimun̲i puṅka van̲r̲ān̲*
*maruven̲r̲um veḷikkilaiyen̲ pārnāṇat tillaiveḷi man̲r̲il mēn̲i*
*aruven̲r̲u muruven̲r̲uñ colanaṭippārk kin̲r̲umaru aḷittān̲ man̲n̲ō*

Saint Kumāracāmi
Dazzling great
As if there is an equal in kindness
To Cuppiramaṇiya Tēvar
Of Tur̲aiai, where
Richness shine everyday
Adorned today the God, dancing
In the open at Tillai
Having a body and also bodiless,
with *maru*
Putting to shame
Who used to say
The sky is odourless

When our monks and a few others heard the stanza, they said: "Excellent imagination!"

"There's yet another little design in your stanza which you have perhaps not thought of", said Kumāracāmit Tampirān̲, and I asked, "What is that?"

"When you said, 'They maintain that there's no fragrance in Space; to put them to shame...', and so on, what you meant was, 'Space has never the property of Fragrance, they say; to put them to shame...', and so on. Yes?"

"Yes."

"Well, your verse can be interpreted in yet another sense: 'To put to shame the Earth who says in her pride, Space isn't fragrant but I am'. Don't the *śāstiras* tell us that one of the characteristic qualities of Earth is odour?" Indeed: the words *ilai en̲pār''* could be divided either as *''illai en̲pār''* they say: Not, or as *''illai en̲ pār''*, the Earth says: Not. Everyone was amazed and pleased with this additional interpretation.

# Chapter 78

## Gap Removed

I spent thus two months at Tiruvāvaṭutur̲ai. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar reached Tirupperuntur̲ai according to schedule. After a few days an order came from him for me to rejoin him there, along with my parents and a few others, and stay for sometime. The Steward Kaṇṇappat Tampirān̲ was advised to make the necessary arrangements for our journey. I set out for Tirupperunturai with my mother and father. The Steward-monk, addressing my father while arranging for the necessary things to be sent off, said: "It's a jungle road; but here and there there are small monasteries and hermitages, and they will look after you." I said, fabricating a pun: "By walking through country roads, no misfortune will happen." In Tamil, country road is *nāṭṭuccālai*; but at the same time, Nāṭṭuccālai was the name of a large village which belonged to the Mutt and which we had to pass on our way in the vicinity of Paṭṭukkōṭṭai.

So we reached Tirupperuntuṟai. A special lodging was reserved for us there. Scholars and men of importance kept coming constantly in the hope of seeing Tēcikar and being received by him in audience. Thus I made a profitable and pleasant acquaintance with Ciṅkavaṉam Cuppu Pāratiyār, Vēmpattūrp Piccuvaiyar, Maṇamēṟkuṭi Kiruṣṇaiyar, Mēlakaram Tirikūṭa Rācappak Kavirāyar and other scholars and poets.

## Piccuvaiyar

Piccuvaiyar was a famous extempore poet. While there, he would recite cleverly-constructed stanzas praising Tēcikar as well as other occasional pieces composed on the spur of the moment. As a pastime, I would make a few playful objections. He would employ the device of pun and change the shape of the words at once. Ignoring the usual rules of grammar and traditional usage, he would make use of rules pertaining to exceptions. When I objected, Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar signalled with his smile that he agreed with my objections. Piccuvaiyar said: "When one composes poems with such speed, can one observe all those grammatical rules?" And at once he would produce a stanza with the following meaning:

*viñcutalai yārcēṭa vittakaṉeṉ ṟāluniṉmuṉ*
*añcu talaiyuṭaiya ṉāvaṉāl — viñcupukaḻk*
*kōmutti vāḻcup piramaṇiyak koṇṭalē*
*māmut tiyaivaḻaṅku vāy*

"Although one would be like the many-headed Ādiśeṣa,
in front of you even with five heads one would be disgraced as lacking!
O lord Cuppiramaṇiya, living in famous Kōmutti,
may the Great Release be yours!"

There is a two-or three-*Cilēṭai*, pun, involved in the stanza, since the Tamil *añcu* means either 'five' or 'fear', and *viñcu* means either 'to exceed' or 'to excel, surpass'; so that the first two lines can also be read as,

"Even the excellent chief (of snakes) Ādiśeṣa in front of you would have to fear as one who is disgraced and lacking!"

We were astonished that he could produce a stanza containing so many clever puns so fast.

## An important gentleman

Most of the influential gentlemen who came to see Tēcikar would be indeed well educated in Tamil. Some of them, knowing that it pleased Tēcikar to always listen to the drone of the Tamil drum, would ask his students to recite Tamil poetry, and would also test them by putting various questions to them. A very rich man of Kōṭṭūr, Raṅkacāmi Mutaliyār by name, had performed some ritual bathing as Sētu, and on his way back, accompanied by members of his family and by relatives, came to Tirupperunturai to have a darshan of Tēcikar. He was well-versed in Tamil literature. Another important gentleman who was in his company seemed to have a solid knowledge of many Tamil books. He was in particular well-acquainted with *Kamparāmāyaṇam*. While they were talking to Tēcikar, he introduced some of his students to them. The important gentleman asked us a few questions pertaining to Kampaṉ's epic. His learning was quite apparent. He questioned mainly me, and I must say that my answers were satisfactory.

## Lessons in *purāṇam*

I wanted to study the *Kāñcip purāṇam* at least once. Since the book was not available during the time of Śrī Piḷḷai, I had no opportunity to read it. That was annoying. The first part of that text was composed by Śrī Civañāṉa Muṉivar; the second part by Śrī Kacciyappa Muṉivar. When I expressed my wish to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, he aquired a palm-leaf script of the text and arranged the Junior Head, Namacivāya Tēcikar, as my tutor. I began to study the *purāṇam* with him.

Namacivāya Tēcikar had been a student of Śrī Piḷḷai. He went on with a systematic study of Tamil texts. He was also very well-versed in the intricacies of *caiva cāstirams*. It was in fact his hobby to teach. I studied the *Kāñcip-purāṇam* with him every day. There is a great difference between the diction of Civañāṉa Muṉivar and that Kacciyappa Muṉivar. In Civañāṉa Muṉivar's version, poetry and philosophy are blended into organic whole. The verses flow naturally, and ideas are an integral part of them, so that the whole presents a well-sounding, aesthetically highly pleasing structure. In the second part, Kacciyappa Muṉivar makes it a point to reveal his learning. He uses expressions from ancient texts and introduces notions current even in the Caṅkam age. His diction reveals the use of very rare word-sequences, as if he would like to illustrate intricate grammatical rules. While reading Civañāṉa Muṉivar, the delightful nature of his poetry makes us forget ourselves. When reading Kacciyappa Muṉivar, we are amazed at his stunning learning.

When I was through with the intensive reading of the whole of *Kāñcip-purāṇam* I listened to a class on *Pērūrp purāṇam*, composed as well by Kacciyappa Muṉivar. After that, I studied both texts for the second time.

## The consecration of Māṇikkavācakar Shrine

Śrī Cuppiramaṇiyat Tampirāṉ, who was there in charge of the administration of the temple at Tirupperunturai, had constructed a shrine on the west side of the first enclosure of the temple, installed there an icon of Māṇikkavācakar, and arranged for its consecration. Irāmacāmi Aiyar, brother of Makā Vaittiyanātaiyar, had already composed *Periyapurāṇak kīrttaṉam*. He had included in them the biographies of the three most prominent Śaiva saints. As there were no *kīrttaṉams* on the fourth of the great Śaiva saints, Māṇikkavācakar, he now composed them in the form of *kīrttaṉais* and presented them there. We then composed ourselves verses celebrating both the consecration of the shrine and the poetic biography of Māṇikkavācakar, and read these out in public.

### Tiruppaṉantāḷ

Tēcikar then decided to return to Tiruvāvaṭuturai, and made preparations for the journey. I sent my parents there in advance, and myself remained with Tēcikar. Irāmaliṅkat Tampirāṉ requested Tēcikar to break journey at Tiruppaṉantāḷ on his return trip, and Tēcikar, complying with his request, set out with his retinue, and reached Tiruppaṉantāḷ via Kumpakōṇam, receiving, *en route*, the homage of many devotees from various places.

Irāmaliṅkat Tampirāṉ had both sides of the road leading to Tiruppaṉantāḷ decorated for miles with plantain trees and leafy festoons. A spacious bungalow from bamboo was built in the Mutt. At first glance it looked like a solid stone building.

Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar stayed there, and no words are adequate to describe the honours offered to Tēcikar by Śrī Irāmaliṅkat Tampirāṉ. There were musical performances. There were eulogies in Sanskrit and Tamil by many *vittuvāṉs* on Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar's presence there. I and my co-students composed many verses in praise of Tēcikar and Irāmaliṅkat Tampirāṉ. They were collected and brought out in print in book-form under the title "An Anthology of Verses by Various Poets".

### Returning to Tiruvāvaṭuturai

As the *guru pūjai* and the temple festival at Tiruvāvaṭuturai were drawing near, Tēcikar could not extend his stay at Tiruppaṉantāḷ for many days. He started for the headquarters after a few days only. The *guru pūjai* and the rest went off in grand manner. Tēcikar rested from the fatigue of his pilgrimage, and attended to his routine tasks. He had letters written and dispatched to many men of note he had met during his trip and become friendly with. Now and then he also took classes for his disciples.

### Classes

Whenever I was free I studied Tamil texts with Namacivāya Tēcikar. I went on teaching many students. Namacivāya Tēcikar was an indefatigable teacher, teaching would never bore or tire him. I used to be present whenever he taught others. At his wish I also took classes in his presence. Being strict in all matters he would send for me at once if I was not there when he wanted me.

## Sharp Chilli

One day soon after lunch, he conducted a class for a few students in the garden close to the southern steps of the tank. Tired by the meal I had gone to sleep in a secluded corner. Namacivāya Tēcikar, noticing that I was not there with the others while he was teaching, sent someone for me at once. No one would dare to fail carrying out his order. The messenger called me, trying to wake me up; I was tired and dazed, and couldn't get up. Finally he shook me awake. I opened my eyes. But my fatigue has not left me; the broken sleep in fact added to my weariness.

'People are damned inconsiderate', I thought, but of course I could not say so openly. Could I perhaps stay away then?

My legs tottered as I tried to walk. My eyelids were still heavy with sleep. I noticed a specially sharp variety of chilli plant on my way. I plucked a pod and squeezed it on my eyelids. It was a thoughtless thing to do, but I was in a condition of near-despair.

To squeeze a chilli-pod on my eyes was an idiotic thing to do; my eyes began to burn at once as if on fire. What I did was like the story of the frog who, in the fear of a scorpio, got into the mouth of a snake. I could not walk on. I dropped down on the ground.

Everyone sympathized with me. My friends realized how helpless I must have been, and felt sorrow for me.

## Listening to *Saiva Sāstirams*

In his classes, Namacivāya Tēcikar, if references to Śaiva sāstirams occur, would quote them fleetingly and leave them at that. It was his cherished opinion that one should study the texts of *Śaiva cittāntam* separately and specifically. While I was Śrī Piḷḷai's student, the ideas that used to occur from the *Śāstirams* then and there, I understood them very well. . Whenever Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar explained to someone the commentary on *Civañāṉapōta Pāṣiyam*, he would invite me to read them. Still, it was my intention to study one day the Brief Gloss on *Civañāṉapōtam* and other *cittānta cāstirams* one by one systematically and thoroughly.

Namacivāya Tēcikar had no free time. Somehow, Śrī Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar guessed my intention. One day he called me and said, "We shall teach you the Brief Gloss and other relevant texts ourselves. Where is there another vessel like you which desires to be filled with all this learning?" And he began to teach me *Cittānta* texts one by one. Thus, listening to his exposé of the Brief Gloss on *Civañāṉapōtam*, to the Summary Comment on Civañāṉacittiyār, and yet to a few secondary texts, the gap in my education I worried about was removed.

# Chapter 79

# The Office of Composing Verses

My days in Tiruvāvaṭuturai were spent in great satisfaction and happiness. Every day I taught, every day I learned and studied, and daily I mixed with scholars. The conversations with Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar lent genuine delight, superior to anything else.

Tēcikar wrote letters to friends every day. At least fifty had to be written daily. He would explain in detail the matter to be written to his secretaries; some letters he would write himself. The secretaries and scribes were usually able to put down in writing what he had in mind. Their boss was called Śrī Civacuppiramaṇiya Piḷḷai. In between Tēcikar would talk to his visitors, listen to their complaints and try to solve their problems. Because of all this he did not eat properly and regularly. Not looking after his physical health as he should have, he developed an ominous cough and bad indigestion. There was less lustre in his eyes now. But he did not reveal anything of his troubles and performed his duties as usual.

Whenever a scholar arrived he would be admitted in audience, and the time would be spent in learned discussions. Tēcikar used to quote profoundly from the *Drāviḍa Mahābhāṣyam* and other sources. At those occasions he taught me, too, portions of that text. He would know exactly what was on this page, what on that, what on his palm-leaf, and what on that. That seemed to me like a miracle. He remembered these things so well by having studied these texts again and again. I was fortunate to be able to spend with Tēcikar a lot of time, and that made me happy.

## Translations

There were times when Tēcikar would order me to use some of his ideas as basis for my poems. I would then at once compose stanzas containing his thoughts and read them to him. It happened sometimes that a Sanskrit a *vittuvāṉ* would recite some ancient *śloka*. Tēcikar would look at me with a glance if it is charming. I would understand his look and immediately produce a versified Tamil translation of the Sanskrit original. When I would recite it, the Sanskrit scholar would usually be pleased and praised the excellence of the Mutt. Sometimes before I went home in the evening, Tēcikar would give me a few *ślokas*, and I would translate them at home into Tamil, so that I could recite them next morning to Tēcikar. He was always enchanted.

## *Bhojacaritra*

One day a Sanskrit scholar arrived at the Mutt with a few stanzas from the work *Bhojacaritra*, which he recited along with his comment. They were all most charming. The meaning which he gave to one of these was, "O King Bhoja, why is it that everyone praises thee as the most liberal patron of all? You won't have courtesans have thy chest, you won't have the enemies have back". I made this at once into a Tamil *Kaṭṭaḷaik kalittuṟai* verse—and that pleased Tēcikar very much.

*koṭaiyiṟ ciṟantaṉai yeṉṟuṉai yāvaruṅ kūṟaleṉṉē*
*naṭaiyiṟ ciṟanta paranā riyaroṭu naṇṇalarka*
*ḷiṭaiyiṟ ciṟantamai muṉṉoṭu piṉṉiṉṟu mīntilainī*
*toṭaiyiṟ ciṟantapuyapōja rāja cukōtayaṉē*

On another day, another *vittuvāṉ* recited a few Sanskrit *ślokas* with the following content: When the great king Bhoja was one day walking along the street he saw a Brahmin coming with water in a leather bag. The king was amazed: To carry water in a leather bag? What can be the reason for this? It is improper, Isn't it? So, he asked the accompanying minister to enquire about it.

The Brahmin, encouraged by the look in King Bhoja's eyes, burst into an inspired verse, saying, "O King Bhoja, all the iron of this country has been used up for the chains which you have put round the feet of your enemies, thrown into your prisons! All the copper of this country has been used up for the copper-plates dedicated to the deeds of liberality which is your reward to your poets and scholars! What vessel can I use for water but a bag of leather?"

The Sanskrit scholar explained the *ślokas* with great fervour. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, evidently pleased, asked me: "How was it?" "Very good", I said, and at once used the event to produce the following Tamil quatrain:

*nērār patattup puṉaivilaṅ kālayam nīṅkiṉaniṟ*
*cērā tularkkaruḷ cāsaṉat tāṟcempu tīrntaveṉṟāl*
*ērārniṉ ṉāṭṭiṭaip pōjavit tōlaṉṟi yāṉitamum*
*nīrā tarattō ṭeṭuppamaṟ ṟiyātu nikaḻttuvaiyē*

"The iron's been used for new chains to fetter your enemies' feet.
The copper's been used for grants, telling your generous deeds.
Tell me, King Bhoja, what else but leather to use
For carrying water in this country of yours?"

## A petition addressed to the wind

Then one day a *vittuvāṉ* appeared to seek Tēcikar's help. He recited many old *ślokas*. All these verses were composed in order to recall in hints the desire of a destitute scholar-poet to be taken care of by a patron, so that the supplicant would not have to say so openly. One of the stanzas used the simile of a sailor struggling for life on a ship tossed by stormy sea; the man addressed the raging wind in a Sanskrit *śloka* which I rendered into a Tamil stanza.

*mīkāmaṉ ceyaṉmuṟaiyum piṟaḻntatu viḻn*
*taṉatuṭuppu mīṉṟōṉ ṟāmal*
*ākāya maṟaittapuyal amputiyō*
*kaṭakkaritāl antō mārkkam*
*ēkāta vitāmalaika ḷuṭaiyatu nau*
*vitaikkaraippāl ēkac ceytu*
*nīkāva latukaviḻiv viraṇṭu muṉṟaṉ*
*kaiyaṉavām nikaḻttuṅ kālē*

The captain of the canoe
Lost his control.
The oars fell down
The hurricane hid
The stars in the sky,
Couldn't cross the sea,
Alas! the waves are heavy,
Couldn't wade the way.
You should take the canoe to the bank
And give protection for both
Under your palms.

There were many poems translated thus by me on various occasions. I have used this opportunity to build up a stock of imaginative metaphors which I used then in making my own poems. Once, because of an indisposition, I was unable to go for a few days to the Mutt; I even had to stay in bed. At that time I composed an *iraṭṭai maṇimālai* each for one of the six main abodes of god Murukaṉ.

## Avatāṉam

On several occasions, the experts in *avatāṉam* arrived in the monastery to exhibit their skills. Their range would extend from eight to sixteen to thiry-two or even one hundred simultaneous tasks. Watching such feats with amazement we felt a desire to cultivate the art of *avatāṉam* ourselves. We practised. Then one day I performed the feat in the gathering of my fellow-students and my pupils. Some of those present indicated a line of poetry for incorporation in a stanza. Some asked for the clarification of their doubts. Some quoted old poems for me to repeat. Some set problems in arithmetic. I gave to all these the proper answers. The one gift necessary for *avatāṉam* is an unfailing memory. One of those who had indicated a line of poetry to me was Rāmakirusṇa Piḷḷai, a Vaiṣṇava co-student of mine. I remember even now that the distich he had given me was, *puṇṭarīka vallitāḷ pukaḻntu pāṭiyuyvaṉē*—I will be saved singing the praise of Lakshmi seated on lotus. Thus involved in the composition of poems often, my ability to compose poems improved. This made others happy, and I got more and more encouragement. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar often said, "You acquired well the diction of Śrī Piḷḷai. Your compositions always remind me of Śrī Piḷḷai," Living always in the thought that all my knowledge of Tamil is the alms I received from Śrī Piḷḷai, these words gave me lots of solace.

### A letter in verse

Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai of Māyūram once sent me a collection of *veṇpā* stanzas he had composed in honour of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, and in a forwarding verse asked me to read them to Tēcikar. I informed about it to Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai in the following poem:

*tāyaka meṉanaṉ ṉāvalar palarkkun*
*taṉamutal aḷittiyal vēta*
*nāyaka makipā nīyaka makiḻntu*
*naṉkaṉup piyamutaṟ pāvai*
*āyaka matilvāḻ cuppira maṇiya*
*āriyaṉ pāluṭa ṉuraittēṉ*
*nōyaka levarkku niṉperuñ cīrai*
*nuvaṉṟaṉa ṉuvalarum pukaḻōy.*

"Kind patron of poets, protector generous, ample,
Vēta Nāyaka, famous with pen, our splendid example!
Thy tribute to Cuppiramaṇya, our wise lord and guide,
Duly have I conveyed to him, with pleasure and pride."

Being thus engaged in manifold tasks of composing occasional poetry my skill in versification increased constantly. Others derived pleasure from it, I ever-growing incentive. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar used to say, "You have made a close study of Śrī Piḷḷai's method of composition. Your poems refresh our memories of him." These words thrilled me, since I have always regarded whatever knowledge of Tamil I have as alms bestowed upon me by Śrī Piḷḷai.

# Chapter 80

## A New Life

Day broke on the morning of Thursday the 12th of February 1880. On that particular morning I felt in my usual good spirits. I was convinced, as were those who were supporting me, that I was safe and secure in the keeping of the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt, and that my security would increase with time. I thought I had reached a haven of rest in my life. Although I did not have the ability to fill Śrī Piḷḷai's place, I expected it to be my life's mission to add to the expanding line of scholars originating with him.

But God's will was obviously different. It seemed to be my good destiny that my vocation of teaching and my research and my services to Tamil should spread far and wide instead of being confined solely to a monastery. That destiny started working. It brought on that Thursday afternoon to Tiruvāvaṭuturai our friend Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār from Kumpakōṇam. A new life began for me.

## Ceṭṭiyār's arrival

When Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār arrived at the Mutt, Śrī Namacivāya Tēcikar, the Junior Head of the monastery, was resting after lunch. It must have been two o'clock in the afternoon. According to Tēcikar's wish, I was at that moment teaching the *Kāñcip purāṇam* to a few students. Ceṭṭiyār came straight to where we were at the time. He did obeisance to Namacivāya Tēcikar who came to greet him on his arrival. He sat down and talked. After having talked to him for about an hour he took leave of him saying, "I have come to meet His Holiness. Please, give me permission." At his wish, I accompanied him.

We found Śrī Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar explaining to someone some difficult points in *Kamparāmāyaṇam*. Ceṭṭiyār and I sat watching. The man who had come to ask about his doubts got through his job, and when he left, Ceṭṭiyār and Tēcikar carried on a conversation about the excellence of Kampaṉ's epic.

## Ceṭṭiyār's request

After they have thus discussed for about an hour, Ceṭṭiyār said, "I have a favour to ask."

*Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar*: "What is it? Speak out."

*Ceṭṭiyār*: "I intend getting Cāminātaiyar appointed in my place. I humbly request Your Holiness to be so gracious as to order it."

*Tēcikar*: "Well, what of that? We'll see. It could be arranged when you retire from your job."

*Ceṭṭiyār*: "I *have* retired from my job. I have produced the doctor's certificate, too. At the moment my post is vacant."

At this unexpected development Tēcikar was startled. I too was stunned.

*Tēcikar*: "You have not told us of this before! We rather thought you would continue in service a few years longer."

*Ceṭṭiyār*: "It is now a week since I applied in writing to be relieved of my duties. I have made arrangements for Cāminātaiyar to be appointed in my place. Please give the orders permitting him to take up the job."

For two minutes Tēcikar was lost in thought. He then said, "His being here is very useful. Therefore we cannot relieve him now."

Ceṭṭiyār was upset. He said, "Your Holiness cannot take such a decision. I have already made my promise to Gopala Rao, the College Principal. A few other men try hard to secure the job for themselves. I have obtained Mr. Rāyar's assurance that he would not appoint anyone but him. I know the great affection His Holiness has for him, and it was because of this that I have done everything possible to get him such a good job. Only a good for all, and fame, will result from it."

Tēcikar did not give up. Ceṭṭiyār continued pleading, quoting some other reasons for sending me on. When it was past seven in the evening, Tēcikar said, "Let it be. Get through your prayers and come and join us for our evening worship of Namacivāya Mūrtti." And he got up and left, to prepare for the regular rites.

## Ceṭṭiyār is upset

We got up, Ceṭṭiyār and I, and went outside. On our way we ran into Kumāracāmit Tampirāṉ, and Ceṭṭiyār informed him why he had come. "What you suggest is completely impossible", said the Tampirāṉ. "How could His Holiness agree to part with one whose services to the Mutt have become indispensible : I too do not approve of the idea; everyone else will think the same."

"What shall I do to overcome these obstacles!" murmured Ceṭṭiyār, as he left him and moved on. Then he turned to me and said, "Don't mind what these people say. Just tell them, 'I'm going', no more, and come away with me. You'll get stuck up in this monastery without any chance of advancement if you spend your whole lifetime here working yourself to the bone. The fifty rupees you're paid here for a year you can earn there in a month. You've to wear yourself out till you're hoarse here, teaching from daybreak till ten in the night, and attend to other jobs, too. There you won't have more than four hours of teaching work per day. Every week you've two whole days free." He continued to describe in detail the differences in service between the two places. I listened but did not really hear. I answered, "I have noted the amenities of Kumpakōṇam you have been talking about. But so far I haven't seen any place on earth superior to this spot. There's nothing lacking here. You shouldn't say that the salary is not high. But His Holiness takes care of all our needs." Ceṭṭiyār couldn't very well realize how much the food of the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt had penetrated my body.

## The state of my mind

My mind kept swinging. The College appointment was what my heart desired. But the affection of the inmates of the Mutt was entwined with my very soul. I regarded the fact that Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar refused to let me go as a sign of the love he felt for me. 'Is money the most important thing for a man? What is so great about the College that is not available in the Mutt? What is its particular dignity? Its outstanding qualities? Its prestige? Is it an easy matter to be associated with such institution?' I was thinking of all this very thoroughly. In between such thoughts the words of Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār enticed me, and they were certainly full of attraction, and very inviting.

Unable to be deaf to all what he was saying I came to a decision and told him, "I shall come only when His Holiness gives me his order. If not, I won't."

"You don't understand now the full justice of my arguments. You'll realize it only later. I'll see to it that I win over His Holiness to my view", he said, and left for his lodgings.

I reached home with a mind still confused. I told my parents about what had taken place. Father exlaimed, "How much facilities and comforts do we have here! And the people, how affectionate they are! Where else can be a place like this!" Mother too was in no mind to leave Tiruvāvaṭuturai.

## The morning's events

I got up in the morning of the next day, Friday. My mind was restless, agitated. Ceṭṭiyār came to fetch me and took me to Tēcikar. He said to me, "You please be quiet. You don't have to express any opinion. I shall see to it that somehow I get His Holiness to agree."

Ceṭṭiyār approached Tēcikar, made his obeisance, and took a seat next to him. I too sat down. I expected Ceṭṭiyār to start talking about me. But he began to talk about something else. "While at Tirucciṟāppaḷḷi Śrī Piḷḷai composed *Tiyākarāca līlai*," he said. "The work is incomplete. While he was composing it, I wrote it down on the palm-leaves. That copy is here. I thought I could complete the work, composing the missing portion myself. Please give the instructions that the palm-leaf copy is entrusted to me." Tēcikar sent me to fetch the manuscript. I went to the library and took a quarter of an hour to search for it, found it and returned. While I was away in the Library, Tēcikar and Ceṭṭiyār, evidently, had been talking about me.

Ceṭṭiyār received the palm-leaf copy of *Tiyākarāca līlai* from Tēcikar's hands, and then urged him: "Please grant me my request and send me back happy."

*Tēcikar*: "It is necessary that he stays here now. We shall think of it at a later occasion."

*Ceṭṭiyār*: "There's hardly going to be another occasion. It is a position of highest prestige. The salary may not be much, but the dignity attached to it is immense. All those students who're studying there at present will be distinguished in later life as high officials. This Mutt stands to gain in distinction by having there someone who has been attached to it, don't you think? So far I have always been stressing there the greatness of this Mutt. If an unknown stranger would succeed me, the bond with this Mutt would snap. If he would come there, it would remain. Does Your Holiness not realize the manifold benefits of such connection? It has always been my idea that my successor should be someone connected with this place as well as someone who had studied under the same Master. Even when he is employed there, he can come here every week. He can spend all his leave here. I have considered all this very carefully before presenting my request. I again appeal to Your Holiness to grant me this boon."

Saying so, Ceṭṭiyār stood up and performed his obeisance with hands folded palm to palm. Tēcikar had been listening very attentively to every one of his arguments. He realized from the urgency of Ceṭṭiyār's words, from the expression on his face, and from the prayerful gesture of his hands, how grave the matter must have been for him. It appeared that he realized at last that both my status and the reputation of the Mutt would gain by this measure. His mind softened. For a while he remained silent. Then he said: "All right. What else can we do?"

### Divine providence

Ceṭṭiyār detected the favourable tone present in that question. He said at once: "A letter to Gopala Rao recommending his appointment, and for him a testimonial from the saintly hands of Your Holiness." Tēcikar sent for his chief scribe, Poṉṉucāmi Ceṭṭiyār, and had both papers written. The testimonial letter ran as follows:

> The bearer of this note, Cāminātaiyar, has been our Court Poet Mīṉākṣī Cuntaram Piḷḷai's good student in grammar and literature for six years and has also studied under us for four years. He is a capable teacher of both grammar and literature. He bears an excellent character.
>
> 13th February 1880/Piramātivaruṣam Kumparavi Cupramaṇiya
> Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt Paṇṭāraccaṉṉati

When, having got both papers properly written, Tēcikar signed the letter to Gopala Rao and was about to sign the testimonial, there was resounding peal of bells for worship of Capāpati. Hearing that, Ceṭṭiyār got up, clapped his hands, and danced in joy shouting, "He's got the job!" Even Tēcikar, who had not been quite at peace about sending me away, felt now completely reassured. He said, "Although we have not been quite willing to spare him, God has decided. Can we stand in the way of divine providence? Well. Let us choose an auspicious hour and send him on. You need not worry any more." Ceṭṭiyār was completely happy.

# Chapter 81

# The heart does not leave

The news spread quickly all over that Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar had given me his consent to take up a job at the College in Kumpakōṇam. All the inmates of the Mutt heard it with regret. Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār did not even stay for lunch. He informed Tēcikar that he must celebrate a death anniversary ceremony at his house, took leave, and left at once for Kumpakōṇam.

When I came home and communicated the news to my parents, they took it in a way which was neither joy nor sorrow. I felt still completely confused. Attachment to old and familiar ground and the prestige of the new place struggled with each other and swayed my mind both ways.

### What Tēcikar thought

It was customary for Tēcikar to proceed to his state-room for the distribution of the sacred ash to his disciples after the last lamp-waving ceremony at the conclusion of the major worship. Many monks and many lay-disciples followed him. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar was led there by the Junior Head who held his hand.

As Tēcikar made his way to his state-room after worship that day, he must have been thinking about his decision to let me leave for Kumpakōṇam. He said to his Junior then, "My Next-in-Command, we have recommended Cāminātaiyar for Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār's job. It was precisely for taking him away that Ceṭṭiyār arrived here yesterday. We have given our consent, and issued a letter of recommendation and a testimonial."

Namacivāya Tēcikar asked in surprise, "How could we do it? He is quite conversant with the rules of this place, and he has endeared himself to the scholars and the distinguished visitors who come here; he is a good teacher to his students. The fact of his being here is of very great usefulness to this place. I, humble servant though I am, would never agree to spare him."

Exactly the same was the reaction of everyone in the Mutt. Everyone was amazed how Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar could have reached such a decision. They thought that even if others forced him he would never agree that I would leave the monastery.

Having heard what Namacivāya Tēcikar had said, the Head of the Mutt now explained the motives for his decision clearly. "What you say is true; all of us know how useful he has made himself to the Mutt. However, we gave our consent thinking of what would be best for him in the long run. As long as we are here, he won't suffer any want. But times are changing. We cannot be certain that those who come after us will offer him the same protection and the same care as we do. Someone may turn up here suddenly and say, 'What he teaches I can also. Paying him for such work is a waste.' What could he do then? In places like this one can continue in security only if one earns the favour of many. It is usually extremely difficult to retain the goodwill of everyone right from the Head of the Mutt to the man in charge of the stores. We desire that those whom we patronize should always lead lives free from care. We are quite convinced that securing a government job is the best thing for Cāminātaiyar, also for his future, and that is why we are sending him on. While we are here we wish to see with our eyes how well established he is in life."

People who have learned about this conversation marvelled at the sharp and prophetic vision of Tēcikar. It was Maturai Irāmacāmi Piḷḷai who had been there at the time who told me later about this event.

That afternoon Tēcikar sent for father and for uncle and told them of his decision. They were rather disturbed. Tēcikar spoke to them suitable words of comfort.

## Auspicious time

Then, at three o'clock, he sent for the astrologer to determine a suitable hour, and the astrologer said, "Eight o'clock tonight is an auspicious time for departure." At once Tēcikar sent for me and said, "We have decided to see you off tonight. Make yourself ready." I was terribly confused. I had never expected to take leave of him at such short notice. The way in which things moved on from the first mention of this subject on Thursday afternoon was proof that whatever arrangements are ordained by divine will do progress at a rapid pace, and that secondary incidents only help by adding to the momentum.

"Should I really start tonight?" I asked hardly audibly, in a faltering voice.

"Indeed", he said. "The astrologer has fixed eight o'clock tonight as the auspicious moment. It is best that anything good to be done is done quickly."

I could not move my tongue to speak. I went home and started making arrangements for the journey. But how to go about it! I could not decide what to take along and what to leave behind. I just collected whatever clothes and books I could lay hands on at the moment.

### Taking leave of Tēcikar

In the evening, Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar went to the temple, finished worship, returned to the Mutt and sent for me. I went. He said to me, "You must set out exactly on time." Then he presented me with a new set of clothes: with an embroidered coat, a muslin turban, a waistcoat, a large white upper cloth worked with gold thread, and a costly shawl, adding with tender affection, "Please, make use of it all." Then were brought at his order a large-size trunk of rosewood, a portable writing desk, a small hand-box, and a silk umbrella with ivory handle, which was worth forty rupees and which a devotee had brought for him from Colombo. He put into each of the boxes a silver two-anna coin and handed them to me. He then called Ṣaṇmukam Piḷḷai, one of his personal attendants, and told him, "Go to Kumpakōṇam tomorrow, buy a pair of slippers for his feet, have a cover stitched for this umbrella, and see to everything else that must be done for him."

He then turned to me. "Cāminātaiyar, do you remember what you said when we went to Maturai for the *kumpāpiṣēkam*? It was a large gathering, and there, in the presence of Maṇi Aiyar, you recited Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai's stanza and you added, 'I have neither an umbrella with me nor a self-important strut'. These two omissions have now been removed." I was moved to tears when I realized that he has remembered what was said by me long ago, and now even acted suitably to such loving memory. "I'll never develop an air of arrogance", I said.

"You not only fill Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār's place and achieve great fame, but proceed from there to Madras and occupy with renown the exalted station of Tāṇṭavarāya Mutaliyār, Makāliṅkaiyar and Vicāka Perumāḷaiyar. May you achieve ever-lasting fame," he said, and passed on to me the betel leaves.

Those words were like the loving benedictions of a mother wishing for her child the best in status and renown. I was soaked in that wave of great love, and yet I could not grasp its entire depth and preciousness. Only later when I actually left I remembered often its purity and greatness.

### The state of my mind

The appointed auspicious moment arrived. I took leave. My legs bore me slowly forward. My body crawled ahead, but my mind lingered behind. At the entrance to the store-room I stopped, without realizing it. I couldn't tear myself off from the place where I got whatever I had wanted whenever I had wanted it. Where else could I find such a place! I walked on. I looked at the lamp-posts standing here and there. How many nights did I spend under them reading in peace and undisturbed! Grief overwhelmed me when I thought of having to part from all this that had helped me to study the book before me not only with my eyes but also with my total attention, without any worry whatsoever. I reached the audience-hall. I stopped there, sad and confused, looking at the spot where I studied with my fellow-students; on many nights I had gone there to dreamless sleep with palmleaf account-books serving as my pillow. I saw those palmleaf scripts, and every object there seemed to come to life and speak to me, and I took leave of them all. Others would probably call me mad: Aren't these inanimate objects? Is he devoted to them? But for me, the whole world has been there, in Tiruvāvaṭuturai. To leave it, and the things that belonged there, was to me indeed like leaving the world.

### I set out

I spoke to all the friends I met on my way, and came home. I took my supper, got into the carriage provided by the Mutt, and reached Naracinkampēṭṭai railway station. Father sent along with me Gaṇapati Aiyar, my cousin, to be of help. Tampirāṉs and friends and pupils came to say goodbye to me. They were truly sad at the parting. I took leave of them all with tears welling up in my eyes.

The train arrived. I got in, and reached Kumpakōṇam.

## Chapter 82

## I pass the examination

It was ten at night when I alighted at Kumpakōṇam station and went straight to Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār's house. I found him taking leave of the students he had been talking to, and about to go in for his supper. He had not expected to see me there so soon. So, on seeing me, he asked with surprise, "How is it that His Holiness has let you go off so fast?"

"Well, today is supposed to be an auspicious day, and so he has sent me off", I said. "You said that you had to celebrate an anniversary urgently. Did it pass off all right?"

### Ceṭṭyār's trick

He laughed and replied, "There was no anniversary; there was nothing. I know how much His Holiness is attached to you. I was afraid to stay there, for if I did he could have changed his mind and told me that he refuses to let you go. So, I left suddenly the moment he made his promise. I had to lie about that anniversary to have an excuse for my abrupt departure. There's nothing wrong in using a lie in the interest of a good cause. The *Tirukkuṟaḷ* says the same thing, "Even falsehood has the nature of truth, if it confers a benefit free from fault."

He then went to take his food and after a while came back. Later we sat and talked for a long time. I showed him the shawl and the other gifts Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar had given me. He was very happy. He spoke of the way he himself had got the job, and also of the efforts he had made during the past two years to secure that job for me. He told me many interesting and useful things, such as about the reputation of the College, about the character of the members of the staff, and about the ways I should adopt while teaching. I stayed that night in his house.

## Bundles of books

After attending to his morning routine on the next day, Saturday, Ceṭṭiyār took from his shelves about a hundred books, and divided them into three bundles with three towels. He loaded them into his single-bullock cart, made me get in, stepped in himself, and we drove on.

"Shouldn't the teachers at the College assess your worth and skill?" he asked. "That is why I'm taking you along."

"Shall we meet Mr. Gopala Rao?" I asked.

"He is the Presiding Diety. Before we can see him we must pay our respects to the subsidiary gods."

We got down at the house of Sātu Cēṣaiyar who was next in authority to the College Principal. We left the books on an enormous round table in his room upstairs. Cēṣaiyar had gone out somewhere. Ceṭṭiyār then took a slip of paper and wrote, "I have brought here the person I have chosen to succeed me. Please, come here, and you may examine him and satisfy yourself whether all I have said about him is true." He put this into an envelope and sent a servant round to circulate it among the teachers of the College staff, R. V. Śrīnivāsaiyar and others. As I watched all this I had the impression as if Ceṭṭiyār were convening a regular large conference on my behalf.

Shortly afterwards, R. V. Śrīnivāsaiyar came there with a few lecturers. Cēṣaiyar, who had gone out, returned, too, and pointing to the bundle on his table, asked: "What are these?"

"They are all Tamil books", said Ceṭṭiyār. Then he introduced me to the gathering.

One of the teachers who were present asked, "Are there really so many books in Tamil?"

Ceṭṭiyār answered, "There are lots and lots more. In addition there are thousands of books in manuscript form waiting for print."

This answer increased the amazement of the questioner.

Another person asked, "What sort of books are these? And why so many?"

"We have here epics like *Kantapurāṇam*, *Kamparāmāyaṇam*, *Pāratam*, *Naiṭatam*, many minor classics, *stalapurāṇams*, and works of grammar like *Naṉṉūl*. Anyone here may take up any of these books, according to his choice, open it, place it in his hands and ask him for the meaning and content of any passage he likes, and his answer will be correct. That will prove to you that all I have said previously was true", affirmed Ceṭṭiyār.

## The Court Poet

Next Ceṭṭiyār turned to me and asked me to show the testimonial issued by the Head of the Mutt. I gave it to him. He took it from me and gave it to a lecturer by name of B. Hanumanta Rao with the request to read it. He began to read it loudly with the words, "Cāminātaiyar, the bearer of this note, has been our Court Poet — ", stopped there, and looked at the faces around. There were no punctuation marks in that piece of writing, and so the one who read it could stop anywhere. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar had given the honorific title to Śrī Piḷḷai writing that I had been "our Court Poet Mīnākṣī Cuntaram Piḷḷai's student in grammar and literature for six years" and so on. When Hanumanta Rao read the paper, he stopped with the words "Cāminātaiyar has been our Court Poet", and rendered me thus a great benefit: everyone thought that it was I who had been proclaimed *vidvān* of the Mutt, and they were all amazed. I was of course very happy about it, and thanked my lucky stars.

## The test

Everyone present there then took up a book each. First one of them opened the *Pirapuliṅka līlai* at random, and asked me to explain a stanza he pointed to in the middle of the book. I read it out with a *rāga*, explained the context, and gave the meaning in detail. A lecturer by name of Civarāmaiyar said, "You may carry on your test in any way you please; I am more than satisfied. He is skilled in music. His reading is sweet to the ear."

"Even his reading is so rhythmical as to illuminate the meaning", said another.

Cātu Cēṣaiyar then selected a few verses from *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*. I read them out suitably and explained fully their sense.

R. V. Śrīnivāsaiyar asked me certain searching questions from *Naṉṉūl*. I answered them all to his satisfaction. Thus all those teachers questioned me in turn according to their fancy and were content with my performance.

## Skill in composing poetry

Ceṭṭiyār then said, "He is also used to compose clever poetry", and asked me to recite a few poems I had written, and I did so. Śrīnivāsaiyar said, "Apart from looking for teaching ability in him we should not much care whether he has the gift of poetic composition."

Ceṭṭiyār retorted, "It seems you would reject such a gift if a person were endowed with it!" Everyone laughed.

A lecturer asked, "Would he compose a poem right now?"

Ceṭṭiyār answered, "Set him a theme, and he will produce a poem in a trice."

While they all tried to think up suitable topic, Ceṭṭiyār suggested Cēṣaiyar as the proper subject. But Cēṣaiyar preferred a poem on Ārāvamutaṉ. "If it is to be on Ārāvamutaṉ", said another, "he might easily quote an old piece as his own composition". And this man suggested Śrīnivāsaiyar as the subject. However, Śrīnivāsaiyar proclaimed, "Śrī Ceṭṭiyār is the Tamil teacher for all of us. Surely the poem should be on him alone". Everyone, including Cēṣaiyar, approved of this suggestion.

"So you've pushed it back to me in the end!" exclaimed Ceṭṭiyār. "Very well. Then you should also indicate what it should be about".

Śrīnivāsaiyar subsequently offered the following idea: "You studied first under Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai. I did so after you. Thus we two are members of one and the same lineage. Therefore I request that you should pass on to *me* the appointment you've held till now. A piece in *aṟucīrk kaḻineṭilaṭi āciriya viruttam* should be composed with *this* as the main idea. In five minutes!"

### The stanza I composed

Everyone kept silent. Ceṭṭiyār watched my face carefully. Signs of worry appeared on his face. I was busy in my mind putting the ideas and words together. Ceṭṭiyār never took his eyes off me. But he apparently had his doubts whether I would succeed or not. Four minutes have passed within,in the fifth minute his doubts were dispelled for I recited.

*vāyntapukaḻ paṭaittilaṅku mīṉāṭci cuntaranā valavaṉ pālē*
*ēyntatamiḻ āyntamuṟaik kiyaivuṟanī itukāṟum iṉitiṉ vēya*
*āyntavaḷa nakarkkuṭantaik kālējil niṉṉiṭameṟ kaḷittal naṉṟē*
*vēyntatamiḻ matuṟpulamait tiyākarā cappeyarkoḷ mēṉmai yōṉē*

In the order of seniority as students
Under Mīṉaṭcicuntaram, strong in words,
And researched in famous Tamil
To whom fame came seeking him,
You should give the place
You have been occupying
In the college at Kuṭantai
With choice festivity
To me,
Befitting your name Tiyākarācaṉ,
Of great scholarship
In all embracing Tamil

Ceṭṭiyār jumped up from his seat and shouted with joy, "Sir, you've lifted a heavy burden from my heart!" The others too cheered, "Bravo!"

I explained the meaning of the piece. Ceṭṭiyār added, looking at the others, "The reference *vāynta* "Work and fair renown" is something to be really pleased about. Only those who have known the Master on close terms would be inspired to use such a phrase so speedily. It means that the reputation and fame one has achieved accompanies real worth and merit."

When I finished giving the meaning I pointed out that Ceṭṭiyār's name, Tiyākarāca, indeed meant the noble lord of givers. I said, "Your name will be truly fitting to you, sir, if you let graciously have me your job; not otherwise".

Śrīṉivāsaiyar said with pleasure,"It is a marvel how he has managed to pack all these ideas into that stanza, and in that speed. He has also referred briefly to my own thought when he spoke about who had followed who in the lineage of Tamil scholarship."

Everyone had spoken in their turn, expressing their satisfaction. Ceṭṭiyār said to me, "Please stay right here. We have to meet Gopala Rao this evening. I shall come and fetch you." With these words he left for his home. The others too went home.

I joined Cēṣaiyar at dinner that day. At five o' clock in the afternoon Ceṭṭiyār took me to Gopala Rao's house. The bundles of books went along with us. Cēṣaiyar, Hanumanta Rao, Srīṉivāsaiyar and others came there, too.

## Gopala Rao

Gopala Rao was then in his room upstairs. As a person always immersed in books, the great man preferred to read in solitude. Everyone would at such time be afraid to approach him.

We stayed in the hall on the ground floor. While everyone was wondering how to inform him of our arrival, Hanumanta Rao made the bold step to go up and tell him.

We kept looking eagerly for Gopala Rao's entry. A few minutes later he came slowly down the steps. The immaculate dress, the sweeping gaze, and the caste-mark on his forehead added to the majesty of his appearance. His whole figure was oozing out a spotless purity. As soon as he appeared, Ceṭṭiyār saluted him with folded hands and said, "As already submitted by me, I am presenting to you the one indicated to succeed me. He may kindly be examined for his fitness." "Your word is enough", answered Gopala Rao. "There is no need for me to conduct any test. I trust your word implicitly." I then gave him the letter written by the Head of the Mutt. He read it carefully. Subsequently, Cēṣaiyar started a speech in English. He explained to him in detail a number of things: the greatness of the Mutt, the reputation of Śrī Piḷḷai, that I had studied there, that I had been teaching there, and he also referred to the events of that morning. Gopala Rao looked me over from head to foot just once.

Śrīṉivāsaiyar then prompted me, "Please repeat the poem you composed this morning." I had to recollect the words since my memory had become dim. It took me more than a quarter of an hour. Śrīṉivācaiyar exclaimed: "In the morning you were ready in five minutes! Why do you take so long over it now?"

I explained: "I could easily improvise a new piece at once. Recapturing the exact words I had used before in an identical stanza takes time."

"The poem is quite simple in diction. They say that such simplicity is the good in English writing." This was Gopala Rao's opinion. I felt as pleased as if a thousand people had complimented me unanimously on my work.

### Unwritten orders

Ceṭṭiyār then pointed to the books he had brought with him and said, "He may be examined in any one of those." Gopala Rao said firmly, "There's no need to", but since Ceṭṭiyār persisted even after that, he took up a volume, opened it, and placed it in my hands. It was the beginning of the chapter dealing with *Mantarai cūlccippaṭalam* — Mantara's plot in the *Ayyōttiyakāṇṭam* of *Kamparāmāyaṇam.*

I read it from the first verse onwards and explained the meaning. Gopala Rao listened and was satisfied. He said to Ceṭṭiyār, "What you have said is true. I find nothing at all to object; what other proof do I need than your verdict and the agreed opinion of others? Please do hand over to him your time table. He may begin with his duties at the College following Monday."

Such were the orders issued directly by word of mouth to me. I received them without putting in an application in writing. Even now after so many years the words of this unwritten orders keep singing in my ears.

## Chapter 83

## Experiences of the first day in College

Gopala Rao's words of appointment filled Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār with great joy. He had been tremendously worried whether indeed his attempts, so energetic and so long ago begun, to drag me away from Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt and make me come here, would bear fruit. Now it all went according to his plans, thanks to the enormous strength of his will which prompted him to fulfil his wish by hook or crook.

### My request

As Gopala Rao gave me his word of appointment I bowed in obedience and requested him politely, "I am new to this job. Please permit Śrī· Ceṭṭiyār to be with me for a few days, in order to give some lessons and demonstrate to me the methods of teaching College boys."

Ceṭṭiyār smiled as he said, "He just pretends. While at the Mutt he has been teaching great classics, so that teaching here won't be a problem. He is more of an expert in various branches of learning than I am. He has mastered a hundred thousand poems."

All of us then took leave of the Principal. As Cātu Cēṣaiyar invited me to take food in their house till I bring my family, I stayed there. I sent Kaṇapati

Aiyar back to Tiruvāvaṭuturai, to inform His Holiness and my parents suitably about all that has so far occcured.

### Remembering Śrī Piḷḷai

The next morning, on Sunday 15-2-1880, I went to Ceṭṭiyār's house to have a talk with him. He expressed in various ways his joy in my obtaining this job, and described the attempts others had made to secure it for themselves. "There are a few among those who had been studying with me. There is for instance Muttic Citamparam Piḷḷai, I like him very much. I even thought of him being appointed for the job. Another student who is very close to me, Catāciva Ceṭṭiyār, suggested someone whom he new. Besides, I do know that a few had applied directly to the Principal. However, I have been more and more convinced that, among all those alternatives, you are the one who should be appointed here. However, I did not reveal my plan to everyone. I informed only Śri Rao, and a few other lecturers. I had wanted you to get a job even in our Master's lifetime. You did not agree. And Master too was unwilling to part with you. In some ways it was good that you did not seek a job then. If Master were alive now he would be happier than anyone else. I console myself with the thought that at least His Holiness will be very pleased. This position is of enormous prestige. As days pass it is bound to grow even more prestigious. There's no doubt about it. I am firmly convinced that the great affection Master had for you as a result of your being his most devoted pupil has enabled you to obtain this position without the slightest hindrance."

As soon as Ceṭṭiyār opened his mouth, a vivid memory of Śrī Piḷḷai arose in my mind. I knew deep in my heart that every word he said was true. 'Yes', I said to myself, 'if Śrī Piḷḷai were alive today, there would be no limit to his joy.' I saw with my mind's eye his serene face filled with a mother's tenderness for me.

I was immersed in those tender memories till, at last, what Ceṭṭiyār had to say to me brought me back to my senses. "The world is a very harsh place; one has to be very careful and earn an excellent reputation for oneself. The esteem and the dignity we have has only one source — our learning. We should add to our knowledge and learning by ceaseless study and constant research. If we conduct ourselves as is fit and proper towards our students in College we win their respect and affection. Our teaching should be clear and open. Frequent questioning of the ground already covered is essential. In getting on with the other teachers one must be extremely careful." He continued to offer me many similar hints.

Then we consulted an astrologer, and he fixed the time after 12 o' clock noon on Monday as auspicious for my entering into the College.

"If you are ready tomorrow at half past eleven I shall send for you to go to the College. Then you may come," said Ceṭṭiyār as he bade me goodbye.

That evening I went and offered worship at all important temples in town.

### I enter the College

On Monday after my main meal I waited at Cēṣaiyar's house. At half past eleven two students, sent by Ceṭṭiyār, came to take me to the College. I put on the coat Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar had given me, wore the upper cloth over it, wound the shawl round my head and started. I laugh even today when I think of that bizarre costume.

Tiyākarāca Cettiyār and R. V. Srīn̲ivācaiyar were waiting for me near a pillar at the western end of the College corridor. They welcomed me there. The hour selected as auspicious was not indicated as a Tamil class. But the two gentlemen took me to the second year F. A. Class. There they had already requested Hanumanta Rao who was taking that class to hand over his period to me as I had to begin my teaching at an auspicious moment, and so, as soon as we entered, he left his seat and came to meet us.

Hanumanta Rao pointed to the chair standing on the platform and said to me: "Sit down there." I could not bring myself to take that seat in the presence of all those people there.

Ceṭṭiyār, who read my mind, said, "This is not Tiruvāvaṭutur̲ai Mutt; it is your duty in this place to occupy that chair." So I sat on the chair as he had said. Hanumanta Rao, Śrīn̲ivāsaiyar, Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār and several other lecturers who were free at that hour settled themselves in the front bench. There were over seventy students in that class. In the front row were seated twenty students who had obtained Government scholarship. Many among the students in the class appeared to be older than I was.

### I begin to teach

I began to teach after having meditated for a full minute on Vināyakar and other gods. I took up the chapter *Iravaccam* — Dread of begging from *Nālaṭiyār*, and taught it from the beginning.

Thanks to the practice I had had while teaching at the Mutt I felt no platform fright, nor did I tire easily. I read out the first stanza in the *rāga* Śaṅkarābharaṇam, with the appropriate pauses. I knew from experience that school-kids could be kept spell-bound by scanning verses with tune.

The first stanza ran as follows:

*nammālē yāvarin nalkūrntār eññān̲r̲um*
*tammālām ākkam ilaren̲r̲u — tammai*
*maruṇṭa man̲attārpin̲ celpavō tāmum*
*teruṇṭa ar̲ivi n̲avar*

"The puffed-up man of wealth
will take the poor for dirt,
for such as are of use
neither to him
nor even to themselves.
The man of sense, the wise,
will they follow such puffed-up men?"

While explaining the meaning, I spoke of the arrogance of the rich of this world who show the contempt they have for the poor, who insult them whenever they help them even a little while exaggerating their favours, with the result that the poor curse themselves asking why had Fate driven them to seek assistance from the rich. While teaching literature, stopping with a word-for-word paraphrase will not arrest the attention of the listeners. So I used examples and analogies from real life to draw the attention of the students to the significance of the stanza in question.

Five stanzas were finished within that hour. When, in between, I introduced quotations to stress the indignity of begging, Ceṭṭiyār quoted a stanza from the *Kucēlōpākkiyāṉam* beginning with *pallelāṉ teriyak kāṭṭi* — Showing all teeth without shame, to illustrate the matter further.

### The second session

As soon as the bell rang I went in front of the others to a different class. Ceṭṭiyār took the boys aside and asked for their opinion about my way of teaching. They assured him that they were rather satisfied.

Ceṭṭiyār told them, "I have been to no end of trouble to bring him here. Treat him with respect. You should behave towards him in the same way you behave towards me." Later he introduced some of these students to me individually.

During the next hour I taught a First Year B. A. class. Ceṭṭiyār and a few other lecturers came with me. At Cēṣaiyar's wish, the Sanskrit Pandit, Raṅkācāriyar of Perukavāḻntāṉ, joined us, too. There I began to teach the *Akalikai paṭalam* of *Kamparāmāyaṇam.* I set the first stanza to *rāga* Cakāṉā, and explained its meaning.

While I was teaching, the boys kept looking straight at me; Ceṭṭiyār, however, scanned their faces one by one. Noting the look of satisfaction there, he, too, was fully satisfied. Suddenly, Raṅkācāriyar rose and voiced an objection to something I had said. At the moment I began to answer him. Ceṭṭiyār interrupted, getting up very fast, and, with a polite gesture towards the Pandit, said, "Let the honoured sir please not open his kind mouth at this time. It is sufficient to simply observe whether he has explained the matter to the students or not. This is not the opportunity for a dispute. Besides he is only a very young man, whereas you are well-advanced in years and experience. A great Sanskrit savant. If something went wrong, my purpose will not be served. I apologize and beg your indulgence for having spoken." Having finished this ornate speech replete with Sanskrit expressions, Ceṭṭiyār returned to his seat. I had known Ceṭṭiyār as someone who was able to silence a person easily and with great courage; I felt now that, even in the College, he will not go back.

The class went on. One of the stanzas in the chapter on Akalikai describes how a *vidyādhara* woman who had gone to the Vaikuntha heaven praises goddess Śrī, how the goddess, supremely pleased, gives her a garland, and how the lady places the garland round her musical instrument. The stanza begins with the line *aṉṉa mālaiyai yāḻiṭaip piṇittu.* Fastening the garland to the neck of her lute. While I was explainng the meaning of the piece, Ceṭṭiyār said, "In our times, students would rather fasten a garland round the neck of their dogs!" Everyone laughed like mad.

### Afternoon events

That class ended, too. In the interval I had my lunch. In the afternoon, we proceeded to the First Year F. A. class. There were more than eighty students in there. We began with the section dealing with phonology in *Nannūl*. I took up the first rule and then requested Ceṭṭiyār to take up some of the subsequent rules himself, and demonstrate the proper method to me. He did so and then asked some questions. I got many useful tips from that.

Subsequently we went to the Senior B. A. class. The boys there had studied under Ceṭṭiyār for three years. That year they were due to take their examination. Twelve students were sitting in that class, among them were S. Rātākiruṣṇaiyar who became the Principal at Putukkōṭṭai, Pālakiruṣṇaiyar, later a famous lawyer at Kōyamputtūr, and Citārāmaiyar, who was to be lecturer in the Hindu College, Tirunelvēli.

This was a class on the *Nāṭṭup paṭalam* — Chapter on country of *Kamparāmāyaṇam*. I recited and explained the meaning of a stanza beginning with *vāṅkarumpāta nāṉkum vakuttavāṉ mīkiyeṉpāṉ* and then asked some grammatical questions.

I asked one of the students, "What is the grammatical relation of the words *arum pātam* 'precious lines' in *vāṅkarumpātam*?". He said, "Relative participle". This was a wrong answer, since the word *arum* is a qualifier, and the whole expression is regarded as a qualifying or attributive compound. Ceṭṭiyār who was present beat his head exclaiming, "Whatever one may say, a few of them will not remember! If someone who has studied with me for three years answers like this, what a disgrace that is for me!" He scolded the student and then said to me, "I won't be repeating again and again the same till I fall apart with age! That's why I quit teaching. It is now your turn to teach well."

I went on with my class. The bell rang. We left the College at once.

Even on that first day I felt confident that I was equal to my task. The students, the other members of the teaching staff, and above all Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār were obviously satisfied with my appointment.

## Chapter 84

## The encouragement I had

On the second day (17-2-1880) as usual I conducted my classes in the College as a matter of routine. Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār dropped in after three o 'clock and watched me teaching. When it was quarter to four, Śrīnivācaiyār came to Ceṭṭiyār and said, "Rao asked which class has Tamil after four today. He may come and watch. Ask our friend to be more than even careful while teaching." Ceṭṭiyār saw me at the end of the class and told me; he added, "Don't be afraid at the sight of Rao and blurt out some nonsense. What all of us think is unimportant. It is his good opinion that counts. You must create the best impression on him."

### Gopala Rao arrives

I went to the Senior B. A. class. Ceṭṭiyār accompained me. I began to teach Naṉṉūl there. I was explaining the grammatical rule *oṉrē iruṭiṇait taṉpāl ērkkum* in *peyariyal* of *Naṉṉūl.* An attender came in bringing a chair and putting it near mine. The next minute Gopala Rao stepped in. I got up at once and saluted him with folded hands. He said, "Please do carry on with your work," and sat down in his chair. I explained the meaning of the rule, gave illustrations, and asked questions. Gopala Rao took a copy of *Naṉṉūl* from a student, opened it, and followed my teaching.

The fact that he was present did not discourage me in the least. I carried on with much enthusiasm. Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār had informed me before that Gopala Rao had made a special study of the *Naṉṉūl.* The knowledge only added to my confidence. I had studied *Naṉṉūl* from my earliest days, I have gone through it with full attention many times, thought about it, classified the information it contained, and committed it to my memory; so teaching *Naṉṉūl* came to me with the greatest ease. I did combine and recombine the information it contained scattered all through the text, and I elucidated it. I had full confidence that Gopala Rao, who had apparently mastered it fully, would feel rather pleased with my special approach.

Ceṭṭiyār, who otherwise used to interrupt and say things here and there, was this time watching everything in silence. He tried to gather from the expression on Gopala Rao's face whether he liked it, or whether he did dislike it.

However, Gopala Rao was the last man to wear his heart on his sleeve. There was always a certain radiance on his countenance. No one could say whether he liked something or not. He was always dignified. It was not easy to read his feelings from his look. Ceṭṭiyār, unable to obtain even a little clue, was obviously very uneasy.

### Ceṭṭiyār's impatience

The bell struck five. Gopala Rao returned the book to the hands of the owner and rose. Ceṭṭiyār and I also got up. I too was very eager to learn what impression Gopala Rao has formed about me. How to find out, though?

Suddenly a student by name of Kirusṇaiyar who was sitting in that class rose up and addressed the principal: "Just a word, please, sir! We students were rather worried till yesterday thinking, Mr. Ceṭṭiyār was retiring from service, and what will become of us? Now we have stopped worrying. Śrī Ceṭṭiyār has brought a worthy successor to fill his place, given him to us, and dispelled our fears."

I looked at him with admiration for having spoken so boldly. Ceṭṭiyār's eyes too revealed great affection for him. Gopala Rao just turned, smiled at him, and left. We set out for home, too.

Ceṭṭiyār asked every single teacher in the College what Śrī Rao's opinion was likely to be regarding my teaching.

Some of them simply said, "He's bound to have a favourable opinion." Others like Cēṣaiyar, who knew him more closely, declared: "Rao feels that he explains things clearly to the students."

Ceṭṭiyār turned to me and said, "Rao is likely to visit your class often and watch you as you teach. Whenever he comes and watches, you should tell me about it."

## News from the Mutt

Throughout that week I went about my duties with full energy. I visited Ceṭṭiyār's house daily, both morning and evening, talked to him, and reported to him on every day's events.

Someone or other used to come from Tiruvāvaṭuturai daily, meet me and tell me what was happening there. Particularly a student of mine, Teyvacikāmaṇi Aiyar, kept coming for a few days to keep me informed. I learned from him that Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar talked constantly about me to various visitors with great satisfaction.

Whatever person chanced to go from Kumpakōṇam to the Mutt, Tēcikar used to enquire about me from him. It happened that the parents or some relatives of boys who were studying in the College would go to the Mutt. They would inform Tēcikar about the progress in studies of their boys, and also about their being favourably impressed by my work at the College. Tēcikar listened and was delighted. Many people who had affection for Tamil and respect for me used to stand just outside and follow my College classes from there, and the moment I stepped out of the class-room they would praise me warmly. All this combined removed my misgivings I was likely to have about my competence whether I would be able to cope with my new job.

While at the monastery at Tiruvāvaṭuturai, teaching gave me one sort of pleasure. The satisfaction I felt by teaching at Kumpakōṇam College was of a different kind. Although the state of affairs in both places had much in common, particularly in the way of certain restrictions, there was in the Mutt a variegated texture of interwoven events, the tradition, the administration, and amidst all this I was the one who was engaged as responsible for Tamil learning. For Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar was a person of innumerable duties, who had to have his eyes on everything. In the College there was place for nothing else but for teaching and learning. Everything else, however important, was subject to that, and no obstruction to teaching was allowed. Hence, since I was used to live, even in the Mutt where all the others were engaged in other matters, completely devoted to the pursuit of learning, my life of teaching at the College, steeped in learning, was like a play, albeit a play with playmates called a restricted time, a limiting place, and controlled classes. And in play there is a lot of fun, isn't there?

## I go to Tiruvāvaṭuturai

I was impatient to go and tell my parents and Tēcikar about the happiness I had found in my work. I would have gone on Friday of that week immediately after leaving the College; but no train was available then. So the next day, Saturday, I took a day train, reached Tiruvāvaṭuturai and went straight to our house. Everyone was expecting me. In front of the house waited my mother with turmeric solution on a tray. As she saw me, she greeted me in the traditional manner waving the tray round, and invited me affectionately inside saying, "Come in, darling."

My parents asked me thousands of questions. As I was answering them I finished my bath and my food. Having informed them about my job at least to some extent, I went as fast as I could to the Mutt. I found the Head of the Mutt in his state-room, his face radiant with joy, seated amidst a few friends. When I came, the joy we felt at the reunion was mutual and difficult to describe.

## Tēcikar's satisfaction

"We were just talking about you", said Tēcikar. "We had taken it for granted that you would have got your job without the slightest problems; that both the teachers and the students would have been delighted with your teaching. We are happy you have succeeded and won splendid reputation all round." His words fell on my ears like divine nectar. They quenched the hunger I had felt for a whole week for the sound of his sweet voice.

I was simply unable to give a ready answer at once, not with a heart overflowing with grateful affection, taking in the kindness in his words of loving welcome. Finally I said, "It's all due to the great attachment His Holiness has for me", and then I recited a quatrain I had composed for that occasion.

*ar̲r̲ārkkut tāyan̲aiya tur̲aicaiyir̲cup piramaṇiya amalan̲ r̲an̲pāl*
*kar̲r̲ārkkuk kur̲aiyuḷatō mar̲r̲avan̲r̲an̲ tirumukattaik kaṇṇir̲ kāṇap*
*per̲r̲ārkkut tuyaruḷatō vuraippamika vin̲ikkumavan̲ peyarai vāyāl*
*cor̲r̲ārkkut tuyaruḷatō yirumpuviyi n̲āvalarkāḷ collu vīrē*

Is there anything wanting
For those who studied
Under Cuppiramaṇiyan̲ of Turacai
The faultless, the mother
Of orphans?
Is there anything to worry about
For the learned
Who see him in person?
Is there any trouble
To those who tell his name
Being sweet to pronounce?
Tell me, you scholars
Of this vast world.

Tēcikar felt that the stanza had risen out of a heart full of joy. He then made a detailed enquiry about everything. He listened with delight to everything I was saying, as if it were something new and wonderful.

## Friends are amazed

I stayed there over Saturday and Sunday, and talked to Tēcikar as often as possible. I also informed about my life in Kumpakōṇam the Junior Head, Namacivāya Tēcikar. My friends in the Mutt were almost constantly with me, eager to knowmany details about the activities at the College. They were truly astonished hearing about things which they had never known: the prestige and fame of the College, its outward appearance, the dignity and greatness of Gopala Rao, the learning of the lecturers, the nature of so many students, how the classes were arranged and run, how everything was well organized. They felt as if they had witnessed the arrival of someone who had gone away to a new and unknown country and taken them along.

The two days passed without my noticing it. I caught the first train back to Kumpakōṇam on Monday early morning.

# Chapter 85

# The kindness of Gopala Rao

I finished my Monday classes. On Tuesday morning I began to teach *Nālaṭiyār* in the second hour to the Second Year F. A. At that moment Gopala Rao, who had been taking a visiting official around to show him various classes, stepped with him into my class. As soon as I saw them I rose to greet them, Gopala Rao signed to me to resume my seat, had two chairs brought in, offered one to the visitor, and sat down in the other himself. It occurred to me, as I watched them, that they may go on watching my teaching for a fairly long time.

I started my lesson. Gopala Rao and his friend stayed watching me.

The poem which I just began to explain was rather interesting. Such was its message: "We should offer charity while we are in full possession of our faculties, for if we postpone it to a later day, that day may never arrive." To illustrate the point I told them a story.

## The story I told

"There was once a man who earned a lot during his lifetime. He lived a life of comfort. He never gave a thought to acts of charity.

He grew old. All his sons came of age. In those days there were no institutions where to deposit one's savings. Therefore he used to wrap up in a cloth whatever he had and bury it in a secret place. After a while the old man became ill and it was obvious that he was going to die. He could not speak anymore. His children and his relatives crowded round him. Everyone of them, eager to fulfil his last wish, kept asking, 'What can we do for you? What is your wish?'

As the old man was struggling with the God of Death, a friend of his came and took him to task for not having performed any single act of charity and urged him to do so at least now. Prompted by his words, the old man wished to perform an act of *dharma*. He remembered the handful of gold he had kept buried somewhere in the mud-wall of his house. Although he desired to take it out and distribute it to those who would deserve it, his condition did not allow him to act according to his wish. He had lost the faculty of speech, and so was unable to communicate his intention to others. What else could he do in such condition? With tremendous effort, in his urge to try to indicate the size of the bundle of gold, he pointed to the wall opposite to where he lay, folding his fingers over his fist. But none of those who were standing nearby could make out what he meant. 'Alas! What does he want? We cannot at all understand what he asks for!' wailed some of the people around him. Then one of his sons exclaimed: 'I know! He always liked very much the sour taste of crab-apples. That's what he asks for. What a misery! This is not the season to get it. But I shall still try. And he ran off fast. Before he was back the old man died.

The boy beat his breast and lamented, 'Alas, he said quite clearly that all he wanted was that sour-crab-apple. I understood his wish, I did, but, sinner that I am, I could not fulfil it!'

There was no connection at all between the old man's thought and the action of the boy. The old man indicated gold; his son took it for a crab-apple."

## Rao laughs

I told this story a bit elaborately and with much stress on it is comical aspects, and as soon as I finished, Gopala Rao burst out into laughter. No one had seen him laugh so openly before. I felt happy that the story I had narrated had amused him enough to cause him laugh.

I went on with the lesson. "If one postpones performing acts of charity to the last moment, one may never have time to do them. Therefore we should do fairly early whatever good we perform to earn the fruit of its merit in the life to come. We should equip ourselves with a bundle of good deeds for our next existence, just like a man who sets out on a long journey provided himself with a bundle of food. This is what the poem says. And I quoted the poem again.

*ciṟukālai yētamakkuc celvuḻi valci*
*iṟukiṟukat tōṭkōppuk koḷḷār — iṟukiṟukip*
*piṉṉaṟivā meṉṟirukkum pētaiyār kaikāṭṭum*
*poṉṉum puḷiviḷāṅkā yām*

The fools who tightly hold
Saying that they would do it later
Will have their fists
Mistaken for crab-apple
When they point to gold
Will not carry the bundle of food
The *dharma* on shoulders
While they are young
To pave the way
Useful to their birth again.

When I finished to explain in detail the meaning of the first poem I began to quote this piece. The lecturer in charge of third hour has not come that day.

Therefore I took over his hour and continued with my Tamil class. Gopala Rao and his friend stayed for both hours and listened.

The hour ended. They rose from their seats. Gopala Rao glanced at me just once and smiled. There was a gentle look in his eyes; and there was mirth in his smile.

I took leave of him and went for my lunch in the interval that followed.

## Ceṭṭiyār's impatience

That evening I went as usual to see Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār, and reported to him Gopala Rao's visit to my class and the events there.

Ceṭṭiyār asked, "Do you know what opinion he has formed? He should be writing now about you to those in authority above; I wonder what he's going to write!"

"How can I know?" said I.

Ceṭṭiyār did not have a wink of sleep that night. He was tremendously impatient to find out what opinion Gopala Rao had formed about me, and he was worried what exactly would be the nature of his written recommendation to the appointing authorities. I expected everything to be perfectly all right, and so his impatience filled me with surprise.

Next day Ceṭṭiyār went to the College as soon as it was open, and asked the Head Clerk: "What does Śrī Rao think about Cāminātaiyar?"

## Good news

He gave good news. "Śrī Rao has written well about him to the Director. I'm just going to send off the mail." Hearing the reply of the Head Clerk, Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār heaved a sigh of relief. But he would not let him off so easily. He kept prodding what exactly he had written. It appeared that he wrote that I had studied at the Mutt with distinction, and that I had rich experience of having taught a number of students there. "I have myself attended his class twice. His manner of teaching was very satisfactory. Therefore, he may be appointed sub-pro-tem (on probation) for two years, and paid the sum of fifty rupees as had been paid to Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār as salary." Such were the details given by the Head Clerk.

Having heard all this, Ceṭṭiyār came and told me, "Our worries are over. By the grace of God my efforts met with success. Now it's up to you, and up to your students." He was overjoyed.

I told him how grateful I was to him. "All this," I said, "is the fruit of your great affection for me."

After that very important event, Gopala Rao treated me with much kindness. Whenever he saw me, he said affectionately, "Is your work going on well? Everything in order? If anyone fails to behave himself tell me at once. If there's anything I can do for you, don't be shy to ask me." These words were a clear sign that he had taken me under his kind protection.

On Saturday that week I invited Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār to accompany me to Tiruvāvaṭuturai. We started in the morning, and I spent there two happy days. When I took leave of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar he sent me on with the following words: "If they indeed pay you fifty rupees as they did to Ceṭṭiyār, stay there; if they won't, quit the job and come back here."

## Gopala Rao's announcement

Next Monday, after twelve o' clock noon, I was teaching in the Senior B. A. class. I continued for a while even after the hour was over. Suddenly all the students rose. Not knowing the reason I asked, "Why do you stand up?" "Śrī Rao is there on the verandah, waiting for you", they said. I went out at once to meet him. He said, "The Director has just informed us that he has appointed you, placing you on probation for two years, on the same salary of fifty rupees as had been paid to Śrī Ceṭṭiyār." I showed my joy by the expression on my face.

All the staff were happy to hear the news. Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār immersed in boundless joy. As for me, where could I find words to describe my state of mind?

## First salary

That week I went to Tiruvāvaṭuturai with a heart full of that joy, and with the half-month's salary in my hand. Ceṭṭiyār had told me, "You should place the first salary you've received into the hands of your parents, and get it back from them." Thus, I first gave the twenty-five rupees in the hands of my mother. She took it and touched reverentially her eyes. She would not be more pleased even if someone else had given her a lakh of rupees. I gave it in the same way to father, and to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar afterwards. Tēcikar blessed me saying, "As the son of such a staunch devotee of God, may you earn much higher salaries, and win the highest honours."

Until then I was living and having my food in the house of Śrī Cātu Cēṣaiyar in Kumpakōṇam. That week I took my parents with me there. We went to live for a few months in a small house we rented in Bhaktapuri Agrahāram.

## Examination and holidays

The final examinations at the College were due at the end of March. In those days, the University conducted its examinations only in December. I set the question papers for the March examinations with the help of Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār. After the examinations I corrected the answers and submitted the lists of marks to the Principal.

Summer vacation began. Taking my salary I returned with my parents to Tiruvāvaṭuturai. At that time, my *cīmantam* ceremony was celebrated at Tiruvāvaṭuturai. My salary helped to meet the expense. And the assistance we received from Tēcikar was boundless.

# Chapter 86

# Holiday events

While I stayed at Tiruvāvaṭuturai I would be sent as a representative of the Mutt to the houses of wealthy and important men in the vicinity, to participate at marriages. The Head of the monastery used to send as a rule garments and other presents to the bride and the bridegroom. I would be sent to carry the gifts and the message. While at Tiruvāvaṭuturai during the summer vacations, one such opportunity arose. In May of that year, the marriage was celebrated of the eldest daughter of Śrī Cātu Cēṣaiyar, one of the lecturers at Kumpakōṇam College. He conducted it with great éclat in Tiruppātirippuliyūr. As he was a man of great authority and influence, the celebrations were attended by judges, district munsifs, tashildars and other high officials of administration and law, by rich gentlemen, scholars of all description,college professors, and so forth. The total cost was more than ten thousand rupees. One can imagine what kind of marriage that must have been if — at that time! — such stunning sum was spent on it.

## The wedding in Cēṣaiyarś house

Every single lecturer at Kumpakōṇam College attended the wedding. I went too, in the double function as one of the teachers, and as an envoy of the Mutt. I have never in my life seen a wedding attended by such a crowd before! The whole town was as full and as teeming with people as if a great religious festival were going on at Tiruppātirppuliyūr. As so many important and famous people were expected, crowds of other people came just to see them. There was a rumour that the wedding would be attended by High Court Judge Sir T. Muttucāmi Aiyar. In those days the fame of that great man had already spread all over Tamilnadu. Everyone who came there hoped to have a glimpse of him. It became known that he would be coming on the fifth day of the wedding. Therefore many who had originally planned to take leave earlier stayed just to see him.

## An old man

On an evening during the wedding celebrations I set out with a few of my colleague-teachers towards the river Keṭilam. We saw an old Brahmin approach us, his forehead besmeared with the sacred ash, round his throat the usual *rudrākṣa* beads. We were walking in a group, and the man stood still, shading his eyes with his hand, and watched us. There was with us a person, one of the Kumpakōṇam lecturers, called Kāḷi Nārāyaṇacāmi Aiyar, who was a gay fellow, talking frequently in a funny, playful manner. He addressed the old man saying, "Why do you stare?"

"Just like that. Have you all come to the wedding in Cēṣappā's house? It seems that folks have gathered here from the whole Presidency. Where are you from? And what's your job?" he asked.

"We're all professors at the Kumpakōṇam College. And yes, we've come for the wedding", answered Nārāyaṇacāmi Aiyar.

He began to question everyone separately about his name, native place and salary. When he heard amounts like a hundred, two hundred, three hundred rupees, he was struck with indescribable amazement. "What?"he exclaimed. "Do teachers earn so much nowadays? In my days a teacher would get four or five rupees. If he earned ten, he would think of himself as of Kubera, the god of wealth!"

It was obvious that the old man put us in the same category as the village teachers doing their job out on the veranda of the village schools. One teacher like another teacher, isn't it? He went on in the same manner.

"It's the white men who liberally give salary in hundreds or in two hundreds. You must be lucky fellows. That's for the first time that I see our people earning so much every month! So, you get a regular pay... But—" And the old fellow suddenly stopped talking. It seemed that he was arguing with himself whether he should say it or not.

Nārāyaṇacāmi Aiyar prompted him, "What were you going to say? Why are you silent?" The old man lost control of the continuity of his speech.

The old man took note of me and the discussion started about me.

"And this young fellow? Is he a pupil in your school?"

"He too is a teacher."

His amazement knew no limits.

"What? This boy, this little fellow — a teacher? How much does *he* earn?"

"Fifty rupees", was the emphatic answer of Nārāyaṇacāmi Aiyar.

"I don't believe it..! Must be God's doing.... What I was going to say...." The old man was again lost in some deep thoughts or memories, or simply in his amazement. "So people get such salaries. It is the gift of God. But do they pray to God? No. Do they observe the rites? They don't. When they get salary from the white men, they consider themselves too as white men."

Nārāyaṇacāmi Aiyar retorted laughing. "Have you included us too in that particular crowd! But we are now on our way to the river Keṭilam."

"Aah", said the old Brahmin. "You're going to perform the evening worship! That's good. That's very good. Whatever it may be, our customs and the traditions of our country must be for us the most important matter. It's our *dharma* to cherish and to protect them."

After he had delivered this council, the old man took leave of us, afraid that it would be too late for our evening worship at the bank of the river. But to me his words sounded sweet and wise. I was raised up among those who would quite naturally observe the rules of religion and rites, who would faultlessly fulfil the commands of divine devotion, and thus I could only feel respect for the advice of the old man.

## Judge Muttucāmi Aiyar

On the fifth day of the wedding celebrations, Muttucāmi Aiyar arrived at two o' clock in the afternoon from Madras to Tiruppātirippuliyūr. Cātu Cēṣaiyar went personally to meet him at the railway station and conducted him to his house. Muttucāmi Aiyar took a seat in a large armchair in the midst of everyone under a large canopy specially erected for the wedding. Next to him was Cēṣaiyar and two other distinguished guests, talking.

The entire village crowd invaded the space under and around the canopy. But although it was such a crowd, they were all silent. Muttucāmi Aiyar was not gorgeously dressed, and yet he looked very attractive to the sight. A snow-white turban, long coat, silk garment of Aryampēṭṭai, spotlessly white dhoti, on the feet Muslim-type slippers — that's what he had on. He held a cane in his hand. He had reached a position very unusual for an Indian, and he boasted of supreme intelligance, English education, and legal expertise. He was very sophisticated. Not only did he earn a salary which many a Westerner would earn, but he also mixed quite freely with white people. In spite of all that, it was obvious from his appearance, from his speech, from many of his customs and views he expressed that he has remained a Hindu. The stripes of sacred ash and a sandal-paste mark on his forehead, the dhoti tied in *pañcakaccam*, and the restraint and calm characteristic of his manner of speaking augmented the attractiveness of his civilized and cultured appearance. I remembered the words which the old man near the river said to us, the previous afternoon, and I thought: That old man would be very pleased to see Muttucāmi Aiyar now.

In the midst of his conversation Muttucāmi Aiyar quoted a distich from the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*. I was happy to see that he had a love for Tamil. He spoke briefly and fast, and quoted the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* to illustrate how one should speak briefly and clearly. All that impressed my mind. That evening he partook in the festive meal, and then took leave and went off to Māyūram.

The wedding was successfully brought to an end. Everyone who had come took leave now. All the guests and invitees left. I returned to Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai and described in detail to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and others is the events at the wedding celebrations, and in particular the few hours of my encounter with Sir T. Muttucāmi Aiyar and my impressions about him. That whole day was spent in talk about Muttucāmi Aiyar — his young days, his studies, his advancement, and the fame the great man had achieved.

### Intira iḻavūreṭutta kātai
### (Mourning the death of Indra)

There was something very very strange about the way Tamil text books were prescribed in those days for college classes. They would set down a certain portion from a work of which only the name was known. Some publisher or other would search for the relevant palmleaf manuscript and print whatever was available as he had found it. With that the Tamil teachers would teach, unknowingly making the confusion even worse. In those days people had just heard of *Cilappatikāram* as an ancient work. It is of course easier to know something about the greatness of a poem than to know the poem thoroughly at first hand. Hence they prescribed a few portions of what they had known by hearsay for study. During the time Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār was in College one of the texts thus prescribed was the description of the festival in honour of Intiraṉ, a part of *Cilappatikāram*. He took the palmleaf manuscript before him and scrutinized it. Nothing made any sense. He went to Śrī Piḷḷai, and the two sat over it together. They found it a Herculean task to decipher the genuine text in the midst of the copyists' errors accumulated through ages. Moreover, there were no tools then to guide one through the maze of the customs and manners of a very ancient age described in that work. Therefore, that text remained obscure. "What sort of book is this?" shouted Ceṭṭiyār. He got wild with anger — directed against the text! "Is it a festival of Intiraṉ that is described here! Or is it a funeral of Intiraṉ? I am not going to teach this damned rubbish! And besides, I am sick. I'll take a leave of six months and go away." He actually did according to his decision, went away, and returned only after those six months were over. In the meantime, Cantiracēkara Kavirāja Paṇṭitar, posted in his place, carried on with the teaching of Tamil; no one could claim that he had actually taught the poem.

If a person like Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār had such problems, there is no need to speak about other pandits. The moment the texts were announced, books were printed off. A Śrīnivāca Rākavācāriyar as well as Cōṭacāvatāṉam Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār of Madras brought out the first part of *Cilappatikāram*. The first edition was that of Śrīnivāca Rākavācāriyar. It was only the original text of the first half of *Pukār kāṇṭam* with the following statement on the title-page: "*Cilappatikāram* composed by Cēramāṉ Perumāḷ Nāyaṉār.""

## The study of *Cilappatikāram*

In the year I got appointed to my new job, four chapters of *Cilappatikāram* were prescribed for teaching, starting with *Kāṉalvari*. I was due to teach them as soon as the College reopened after summer vacations. I happened to overhear certain people wondering how I was going to manage to teach *Cilappatikāram*. Therefore I made up my mind to master it in the best way I could. It was difficult, though, to arrive at the true meaning with the help of the printed text. When I told about it to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar he said, "There is a palmleaf manuscript in the Mutt. It is possible to study it with the help of the Junior Head." It was simply unjust to expect Namacivāya Tēcikar to have a critical knowledge of a text that Śrī Piḷḷai himself had found full of question-marks. Still, there could be substantial gain in quite a few ways by studying the work together with such a keen intellect as he had. So I went to Namacivāya Tēcikar with the manuscript in hand, and started reading. We went together through the text, studying it carefully. Somehow we were able to finish reading it; to some extent, we could even arrive at the meaning.

Several days went like this. The rest of the days was spent in studying other works and in teaching.

## A new house

As soon as the summer holidays were over, father expressed the wish to move permanently to Kumpakōṇam. With that in view he set out for the town to look for a suitable house. As he was setting out mother said, "It would be nice to live near the Kāvēri." And I said, "It would be convenient to settle down near the

College." Father walked there the whole way. He was absolutely not used to travel by train.

When, after looking over houses in several streets at Kumpakōṇam, father stepped into Bhaktapuri *akkirakāram*, the Brahmin quarter, he chanced to overhear the conversation of two people of whom one said, "There's Maṅkaḷāmpā. Don't worry." Maṅkaḷāmpā is the goddess installed in the Kumpēcuvarar Temple of the town. Father took the words to be an excellent omen, and rented a small house right in the middle of that street, in the eastern row, for three and a half rupees per month. It was fifteen feet wide and forty feet long. Behind the house was a rather spacious garden.

Although to everyone else the house seemed to be not sufficiently spacious, to my father it seemed to be a real palace — all because of that so-called good omen. Moreover, he suffered in life so much poverty, so many worries, so many setbacks, that he was not only prepared but determined now, to live in utmost thriftiness when money available. So, according to his opinion, the house was just the right size.

Having seen the house, he decided to rent it, and having come to terms he returned — again walking the whole way — to Tiruvāvaṭuturai. "It's not far from the Kāvēri; and it's not far from the College so that Cāminātaiyar can come home for lunch. It was all due to that good omen." Thus he had pleased both mother and me.

The holidays finished. But father was reluctant to leave Tiruvāvaṭuturai. Nevertheless, we somehow reconciled ourselves to the change. We took leave of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and our other friends, started for our new home, reached Kumpakōṇam, and entered the new house. I ceased to be the inhabitant of Tiruvāvaṭuturai and started a new life as a citizen of the town of Kumpakōṇam on that day.

## Chapter 87

## A care-free life

When I joined duty at the Kumpakōṇam College, there were high school classes, too. Tamil was taught in those classes by Śrī T. K. Nārāyaṇacāmi Piḷḷai.

Although my new College job came to me rather than I to it, when I found out how many people were so keen to get it, and what effort in that direction they had made, I realized how precious, and in a way unique it was. Among those who tried hard to get it were Nārāyāṇacāmi Piḷḷai who taught Tamil at Bangalore College; Catāvatāṉam Cuppiramaṇiya Aiyar of Tanjāvūr who had composed many *purāṇams* and the *Rāmāyaṇa veṇpā*, and the Tamil pandit of Cēlam College, Caravaṇap Piḷḷai. As they applied straight to the Director of Instruction, he sent them to Gopala Rao. He was reported to have replied, "There is no need to consider their applications since a suitable choice has already been made."

### The efforts of Kōvinta Piḷḷai

When I had left for my holidays in Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai, Vitvajjaṉa Cēkarar Kōvinta Piḷḷai, the *vidvān* of Tirucci, arrived at Kumpakōṇam and, having found out only that Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār had given up his job, went to Gopala Rao and tried to convince him to offer the position of the Tamil lecturer to his son. When the Principal said, "We've already appointed someone else", Kōvinta Piḷḷai asked directly, "And who's that?" The Principal told him that I had been appointed. At that, Kōvinta Piḷḷai said, "Is that so? Congratulations. I know him well. He's very good." And he left.

### Saying good-bye to Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār

Although Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār had retired from his job, he had to stay on in Kumpakōṇam for some six months longer since there were certain complications concerning his pension which needed his attention. Subsequently he made arrangements to return to his native place. Since he lived in Kumpakōṇam for such long years and became a well-known and distinguished citizen, he made a lot of friends in the town. The College staff as well as teachers of other schools held him in great esteem. Everyone was sorry to see him leave Kumpakōṇam. They wanted to give him a proper send-off and present him with keepsakes as a token of the high regard they had for him. Finally his friends decided to present him with a costly garland of *ruttirākṣa* beads whose faces were in a progressively ascending scale and with an exquisite shawl. The farewell function was arranged for the evening of the day before his departure, and took place in the bungalow of the lawyer T. Cuntaram Aiyar in Kalyāṇarāmaiyar Street. Gopala Rao presided. Several people spoke of Ceṭṭiyār's outstanding qualities. I myself read out ten stanzas which I had composed in his honour. One of the stanzas is as follows.

*varuntiyarun tamiḻnamakku yārpukalvā reṉṟēṅkum maṉatti ṉōrkaḷ*
*tiruntiyacen tamiḻccelvaṉ tiyākarā cappulavar tilakaṉ ṟaṉpāṟ*
*poruntiyavaṉ viḷaṅkaveṭut turaittiṭunal luraikaḷaittam punti vaippiṉ*
*maruntiyalain tiyaluṇarvār kavipukalvār piṟacaṅkam vakuppār maṉṉō*

Those who are anxiously
Suffering, not knowing
Who will teach them Tamil,
If they store in their brains
All the good words of explanation
Of refined *Centamiḻccelvaṉ* Tiyākarācaṉ,
Will know the medicine — like
Five grammars,
Will compose poems and
Will give lectures.

As the function ended Ceṭṭiyār asked Gopala Rao, "I'll be leaving for my place tomorrow morning. Permit me to bid you good-bye now. Has the person whom I had recommended proved himself satisfactory?"

Gopala Rao answered at once with a smile, "Oh, he is in every way as competent as you have described him. The boys too are very much content with him. He has demonstrated his capabilities in this gathering too, hasn't he?"

Although Ceṭṭiyār had asked about that matter often and verified the reports in various ways, he apparently wanted, at the time he was due to leave, to hear it once more straight from the mouth of Gopala Rao. As soon as he heard Gopala Rao's words he turned to me with a beaming face. I bent my head down, embarrassed.

When the crowd dispersed I went with Ceṭṭiyār to his house. I felt a strange sadness at the thought that he will be leaving for his place next morning. Somehow I got attached to him and wanted to remain with him always. At his home he introduced to me his private students and told me in detail what were their specific requirements and qualities. He said to me, "These youngsters come to me regularly to study several Tamil texts. Henceforth I won't be able to teach them. So, I give them up to your charge, and I request you to continue with them where I let off."

"There is no more sacred duty for me who had occupied your job in the college, than to carry on this task which you have just set for me", I said. In this way I began to teach several persons like Catāciva Ceṭṭiyār, Kumāracāmi Aiyar who was a Vīraśaivar, Rāmaliṅka Paṇṭāram, Cāmi Paṇṭāram, and Kirusṇacāmi Uṭaiyār.

## Getting used to teaching

Teaching at the College did not seem to me to be difficult at all. I was used to teach every text in great detail from the very first to the very last page, and thus it was no great thing to teach only a few passages of the pertinent literary works in the College classes. I felt great desire to teach, to a few private sutdents, the *Pirapantams* and other literary and grammatical texts as I was used to do in the Mutt. I felt for certain that this was the way how to keep my own knowledge and abilities unblunted. It was therefore a matter of great satisfaction to me that Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār had entrusted his own students to me. I began to teach them in depth. A few boys from the College came to me out of their own initiative and asked me to go through a few texts with them. In addition, a few others, living in Kumpakōṇam, approached me with the books they wanted to study, and asked me for instruction.

## Letters to Ceṭṭiyār

Next day after the farewell function Ceṭṭiyār left Kumpakōṇam for Tiruvāṉaikkā, a suburb of Tiruccirāppaḷḷi, and settled down there for good. He continued to write from there to friends in Kumpakōṇam. In the letters he sent to me he pressed me to come and stay with him during College vacation. Even later he wrote frequently, and I answered every one of his letters.

## Training in poetry

At first I wrote my letters to Ceṭṭiyār in prose. In one of his letters he wrote in reply, "If you continue to write like this you will lose touch with the art of composing poetry. It is not my intention to induce you to write first a verse at the top and then proceed to give the news as was the custom of our Master. My idea is that you should keep up your practice and train in composition." Thereafter I kept writing stanzas like this, and sometimes I would make out even whole letters in verse. He too used to put in verses at the top of his letters — small stanzas which praised me. He also praised my poems.

In addition, at the insistence of Ceṭṭiyār, I went on composing praise-poems for deities as well as occasional stanzas. I put together an *iraṭṭai maṇimālai* in praise of Periya Nāyaki, the goddess in Śrī Nākēcuvarar temple, and I composed several hymns on Śrī Kumpēcuvarar and many poems on god Murukaṉ of Cuvāmimalai.

The strong winds and rains of the month of *Āṭi* of that year damaged a lot of trees. I composed a few stanzas describing that disaster, and read them out for my friends.

*kaḻuttuyara muṟumuṭaloṭ ṭakamāti paṉmirukam*
*kavalap palvīk*
*kuḻuttuyarak kamukupaṉai ṭeṅkāti maraṅkaḷkulai*
*kulaiya vērō*
*ṭiḻuttuyara veṟintuyirkaḷ viḻuttuyara maruvamarut*
*tiyaṟṟum nōyām*
*muḻuttuyara māyavitaik kāṟṟuyara meṉavevarum*
*moḻivā reṉṉē*

The camel with a long neck
Many other animals
And herds of birds are suffering.
Palms of areca, palmyrah and coconut
And other trees
Are uprooted with their bunches.
Living beings are greatly afraid of
This disease of complete disaster.
Every one says it is the
Disaster of the wind *(kāl)* complete.
But it is just one fourth *(kāl)* of it.

*urampayilum palamaramu marampaiyumik kāṟṟiṉāl*
*oṭintu cāynta*
*varampaiyaṟu kālutaiyā levvuyirun talaicāytal*
*marapā maṉṟō*
*cirampayilum pantaruṟum palakāliv vorukāliṟ*
*citaintu vīḻnta*
*tarampayilī taticayaṅko loṉṟupala vaṟṟaivelal*
*cakaca maṉṟō*

Many strong-wooded trees and
The banana trees
Are shattered by strong winds.
Isn't it usual
That all lives
Have their heads smashed
By the stroke of *kāl* (leg/wind)
So
Is it a wonder
That the tall *pantal*
Supported by many *kāls* (legs/pillars)
Is smashed by this one *kāl* (wind)?

They were impressed; their comment was, "It is the custom up in the West to compose verses at any suitable occasion, to put into stanzas their impression of any event".

It was more important to show one's skill in formal matters than to produce any original ideas in such occasional poetry. People in those days simply loved to listen or to read that type of poems.

## The praise of the Head of Tiruppaṉantāḷ

Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar had told me that I should soon go and see Irāmaliṅkat Tampirāṉ, the Head of the Kāśī Mutt at Tiruppaṉantāḷ, and inform him that I had got a job; so, on a free Saturday and Sunday I went, and had a pleasant talk with him. He said, full of appreciation, "It is the fruit of your father's meticulous worship. The affection which Śrī Piḷḷai had given you in plenty has not been in vain. It has brought its fruits through Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār."

After a few months, Irāmaliṅkat Tampirāṉ appointed as his Junior my friend and the *vidvān* of Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt, Kumāracāmit Tampirāṉ. This news has pleased me immensely. I felt a great desire to go at once to Tiruppaṉantāḷ and see him. I went at the first possible occasion, met him, and expressed my congratulations. He said, praising greatly the saintly qualities of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, "It is all due to the boundless and graceful affection of His Holiness. You have got a position of rank. Now, I who am your friend, have also got a position of rank!"

## My son's birth

By God's grace I was blessed with the birth of a son a few months after my appointment at the College in the house where I lived. Father went to Tiruvāvaṭuturai to give this happy news in person. As he waited upon Tēcikar at a suitable place with candy and sugar, and told him, he was most pleased of all. He immediately ordered candy to be brought in enormous quantities, and distributing it among everyone in the Mutt; he went on saying with pleasure again and again, "Our Cāminātaiyar has been blessed with a son!" Father was astonished at his genuine, pure love for us. The astrologers who computed the child's horoscope were saying, "More happiness is yet in stock for this family." At this, father was immensely pleased. There is a famous shrine at Tirunallūr, in the neighbourhood of Uttamatāṉapuram; and as the child was born as a result of prayers made there to the presiding deity, Śrī Kaliyāṇa Cuntarēcuvarar, the boy was named Kaliyāṇa Cuntaram. As it also happened to be the name of the Lord of Maturai, it served to remind us in a way of my Master, too.

### Father's help

Although I had now reached the stage when I had become the parent of a child, in matters of family responsibilities I remained an infant myself. This is me, this is my job, these are my books — that was all. There I stood. I did not care at all about house-keeping, about the family budget, about the special occasions. I left all these in father's charge entirely. As soon as my salary arrived I would place it into his hands. I would ask him for money, even if it would be one pais for myself to spend. I knew from experience what tremendous relief such arrangement represented. There is no joy in life to be compared with a man when he does *not* have to hear that the household has run out of salt or tamarind. Father has taken upon himself the duty to run the house-hold, to think in advance of all the provisions to be bought, and to stretch a penny as far as it would go. If he had not taken it upon himself, half my time every day would have been spent in such activities. Although father had been of assistance and support to me from my earliest childhood, I could never forget the tremendous help he has given me by relieving me of the burden of day-to-day family cares, and thus enabling me to live without such worries. It was that assistance which made it possible for the close relationship between Tamil and myself to grow constantly in intensity and intimacy.

## Chapter 88

## "What is the use?"

I spent all my time teaching at College and giving classes to students who came to my house in my spare hours. At that time, a certain Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār of Cēlam came on transfer to Kumpakōṇam from Ariyalūr as Munsiff. My good fortune conducted me to him. Because of his friendship, a turning point occurred in my life. The vastness of Tamil literature was revealed to me. Not confining my enjoyment of the pleasures of Tamil to *pirapantams* like *antāti*, *kalampakam*, *piḷḷaittamiḻ*, *ulā*, *kōvai* and similar works, and the *purāṇams*, I was now nourished with the natural taste of sweet Tamil found in abundance in the Tamil classics of ancient renown, and morever, I had the unique good fortune to make others aware of it and enjoy it fully.

### Cēlam Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār

Mutaliyār came of an illustrious family of Miṭṭā Zamindars in Cēlam. Even in his youth he was a brilliant and learned man. He was well-versed in Tamil and music and Sanskrit. During his tenure in Kumpakōṇam, his brilliance shone in conversation to some extent, and hence the élite of the town called on him and made it a point to talk to him. At Tiruvāvaṭuturai it was a rule to send suitable people to wait upon new officials appointed at Kumpakōṇam, and to invite them to the Mutt for occasions like the *guru pūjai*. Śrī Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar who heard of Cēlam Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār's erudition and personality, sent the monk who was his *kārupāru tampiraṉ*, with a few others, to meet him. The monk and his retinue went, and had a long interview with Mutaliyār.

Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār was well aware of the time-honoured greatness of Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt and, after having made the usual enquiries in his talk with the *tampiraṉ* about the monastery's administration, began to ask about its services to education. "What has been done in the Mutt to spread Tamil studies? Who are the scholars resident in the Mutt? How many students are there?" Questions like these issued from him, and the monk answered them as well as he could. He stated that distinguished scholars and artists, accomplished in Tamil, Sanskrit and music, visit the Mutt regularly and are awarded with honours, that the Head of the Mutt is a man of great learning himself, and that many students are coached in Tamil by him and by the Junior Head.

While he was being informed like this, an official of the Mutt by name of Civacuppiramaṇiya Piḷḷai who had accompained the *tampiraṉ*, now said, "The Tamil Pandit at this town's Government College, known as Cāminātaiyar, is one of those who have received their education in the Mutt."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Mutaliyār and added, "I have not met him."

Then they talked more, and the *tampiraṉ* and the others took leave of Mutaliyār, returned to Śrī Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, and made their report. At once the Head of the Mutt sent me a message, "The Mutaliyār who has now come there to take over as Munsiff seems to be a specialist in Tamil. You should go and see him."

### First encounter

At first I had no wish to meet him; but because Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar desired that I should see him, one day I set out. It was on Thursday, 21-10-1880, that I came to his house and met him. I told him that I was a former student of the Mutt, now serving on the College staff. He spoke with the indifference one shows to a stranger in whom one has no interest. 'He behaves like this', I thought, 'because of the prestige of his office; would he talk to me like this if he were truly a student of Tamil?'

"Under whom did you study?" he asked.

"I studied with Mahāvidvāṉ Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai", I said.

I expected that as soon as he would hear the name of Śrī Piḷḷai he would show some excitement. Perhaps he would speak to me with some regard because of my place in the lineage of Śrī Piḷḷai, even if he had denied me such regard on account of the post I held. Even then he did not come forward to speak with respect. He spoke very few words.

'What is he, to hear Śrī Piḷḷai's name and to show no respect and shove it away! He — and a lover of Tamil? That's all a lie!' This is how I decided within myself.

He went on with his questioning. Next question which issued from him was, "What all are the books that you have studied?" 'When I answer this question he will be stunned', I thought, and with this assurance in mind I rolled off a long list of titles. "*Kuṭantaiyantāti, Maṟaicaiyantāti, Pukalūrantāti, Tiruvaraṅkattantāti, Aḻakarantāti, Kamparantāti, Mullaiyantāti, Mīṉāṭciyammai Piḷḷaittamiḻ, Muttukkumāracuvāmi Piḷḷaittamiḻ, Akilāṇṭa Nāyaki Piḷḷaittamiḻ, Cēkkiḻār Piḷḷaittamiḻ, Tirukkōvaiyār, Tañcaivāṇaṉ Kōvai...*' I continued like this, Pilling *pirapantams* upon *pirapantams* naming twenty *antātis*, twenty *kalampakams*, fifteen *kōvais*, thirty *piḷḷaittamiḻs*, twenty *ulā*, *tūtus* — but not even a sesame seed's worth of surprise showed on his face.

## A list of empty names

"What is the use of studying all this stuff?" he exclaimed suddenly, interrupting the flow. I was deeply disappointed. 'Perhaps he is totally dazed by the English he has picked up. That's why he talks like this', I thought, but did not give up. I began to enumerate the *purāṇams*.

"*Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam, Tirunākaikkārōṇappurāṇam, Māyūrappurāṇam, Kantapurāṇam, Periyapurāṇam, Kuṟṟālappurāṇam...*"

He remained unmoved as before, like a stone statue.

I went on naming further books, "*Naiṭatam, Pirapuliṅkalīlai, Civañāṉapōtam, Civanāṉacittiyār* with commentary...." Then I took up the grammars for listing. But still he remained unimpressed. 'Really!' I thought. 'I must have forgotten the most important book of all! If only I had mentioned it first, he would have certainly appraised me justly!' And I declared firmly, "I have read the whole of Kampaṉ's *Rāmāyaṇam* two or three times. And I've studied several parts of it with Śrī Piḷḷai!"

"Well, is that all?" asked Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār.

I was very annoyed. 'To remain unimpressed even by *Kamparāmāyaṇam!* What arrogance!' What more could I add? But he did not let me off easily. He began to ask again.

## Ancient books

"All right, so you have studied all these recent books. But have you read any of the ancient texts?"

I did not understand what he meant by asking me that question. 'Does he perhaps think that I have limited my studies to the books composed by Śrī Piḷḷai? Aren't *Kantapurāṇam, Periyapurāṇam,* and the other works ancient enough? Isn't perhaps *Kamparāmāyaṇam* an ancient classic? What other works does he consider ancient?'

I said: "I dare say that quite a few of the books which I mentioned are indeed old enough!"

"Have you read any of the books which provided the model of all those mentioned by you?" That question of his told me that there was a reason in all what he had said.

"I am afraid I don't know exactly what books you have in mind?" I asked.

"Have you read *Cīvakacintāmaṇi?* Have you read *Maṇimēkalai?* Have you read *Cilappatikāram?*"

I have not read any of the books he mentioned; not even my Master has read them. Indeed, I have not even set my eyes on any of them. However, I thought: 'What does he mean by ignoring all those books that I had read and quoted, and making so much of the fact that I omitted the study of some two or three texts!' With this thought, great pride took hold of me. "These books are not available. If they were, I would have no problem in reading them," I said boldly.

Mutaliyār, who had so far been indifferent, looked me straight in the face and watching me closely said, "I'll give you a copy. If I do, will you study and teach it?"

"Without the slightest hesitation. Certainly I will", I declared with self-assurance. I was convinced that, with the help of my intellect and my knowledge and training, I would somehow master these works.

"Well, I shall keep a copy of *Cintāmaṇi* for you. You may look at it and read it. And do come here often." I took leave and went. When I compared the tone he had used.when I went to meet him with the words he spoke at our parting, I concluded that he was an extraordinary man, a person of deep knowledge and sharp intellect.

### Second meeting

I went to see Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār next Sunday. This time he welcomed me with much kindness. I felt an unrestrainable eagerness to see the work he had mentioned rather than see him. He placed in my hands a paper manuscript of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. He said, "First read this. Later we can start our classes." "I'll do that", I agreed. Then he began to tell me the history of his acquisition of that copy.

### How Mutaliyār obtained the Cintāmaṇi

"I was very keen on studying ancient classics like the *Cintāmaṇi*. Not one single scholar whom I have met in this country has read them or has been familiar with them. Nor were palmleaf books available. I thought that such copies could be found in the homes of scholars in and around Tirunelvēli, and asked my friend A. Irāmacantiraiyar, who was Munsiff at Śrī Vaikuṇṭam, to help me. He made a number of enquiries here and there; but it was all in vain.

Once a man turned up to give evidence in a case, and he was apparently a descendant of a line of poets belonging to a place near Śrī Vaikuṇṭam. When he was questioned, my friend found out that he came from a family of poets and that his ancestors had composed a number of poems. When depositions were all over the Munsiff took that witness aside and asked him if any palmleaf manuscripts were preserved in his house. The man said 'Yes', and was asked to search for a manuscript copy of *Cintāmaṇi*, and, if available, to bring it to my friend. Because of his authority as Munsiff he was successful: the man duly brought him a copy of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. He paid thirty-five rupees for it, and sent it to me. The book in your hands is a copy made from it on paper.

I took so much trouble to get the book, and yet I was unable to read it. When I studied in College, we were taught only its first portion, the *Nāmakaḷilampakam*. It had been printed by an Englishman. There was more of English than Tamil in it. In my eagerness to study the whole book, I question every scholar I meet at every place I go. All of them stop with *antātis*, *piḷḷaitamiḻs* and *purāṇams* — beyond that no one has gone. That has annoyed me very much.

This book is a very outstanding work. It was this *kāvya* that has served as model for all the poetic force and excellence of *Kamparāmāyaṇam.* If you study it, understand it and teach it, you will definitely benefit yourself; to me it will give great pleasure."

I followed Mutaliyār's words with close attention. When I realized that even Śrī Piḷḷai, whose amazing erudition took in the entire range of Tamil literature, had not read *Cintāmaṇi*, I felt awed, thinking, 'How can I take up this new text and construe its meaning?' However, on second thoughts, I felt a rising confidence: Is it a book which is outside the traditions of Tamil creative writing? Is it something for which I would have to learn from scratch, like Sanskrit or Telugu? If it is a Tamil book and I read and study and scrutinize it closely, will it remain closed to me, with all my acquired knowledge of Tamil? What can there be in that book that this man, upon hearing of my study of so many Tamil texts, could brush it off with his pronouncement of 'What use'? We'll see and find out.'

"I'll call again later; I'll come when I have seen this and read it", I said with high spirits, as I took leave of Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār and went home.

## Chapter 89

## Jaina friends

I began to read the copy of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* given to me by Cēlam Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār. It also contained a commentary by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar. Apart from the fact that I knew that it was an epic poem with Cīvakaṉ as its hero, I knew neither its story nor its special merits as literature. Previously I entertained the idea that I knew almost the range of Tamil poetry. *Cintāmaṇi*, being beyond the limits of my knowledge, taught me a first lesson in humility.

### The research in *Cintāmaṇi*

I sat down with the copy of the book in my hand.

*mūvā mutalā vulakammoru mūṉṟu mēttat*
*tāvāta viṉpan talaiyāyatu taṉṉi ṉeyti*
*ōvātu niṉṟa kuṇattoṇṇitic celva ṉeṉpa*
*tēvāti tēva ṉavañcēvaṭi cērtu maṉṟē*

He that is adored by the threefold world without end of beginning
He that has attained in Himself the eternal bliss
He that forever forms the exhaustless treasury of virtues
Let us do obeisance to the Feet of this God of gods.

This was the first stanza of *Cintāmaṇi*. There was not a single word in it which would be obscure in meaning. But as a prayer at the beginning of a text it showed a certain novelty, at least to me. There was in this work no prayer to Vināyaka, no protective stanza addressed to Caṭakōpar, such as I knew them from the books I had read. Of course such stanzas would not be found in a *kāvya* of Jaina persuasion; at first it seemed to me to be a prayer to a common God. The only thing which I did not understand was the phrase speaking of "a world without beginning or end".

I turned to the commentary. Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar comments first on the theory of epic. Then follows his gloss on the lexicon and so on. The chapter on phonology of the *Tolkāppiyam*, with commentaries by Iḷampūraṇar and Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar, had been published in print by this time, and so had the chapter on words, with a commentary by Cēṉāvaraiyar. Since I had studied them, the notes on phonology and words occurring in the commentary on *Cintāmani* were quite comprehensible to me. In the commentary, the phrase *mūvā mutalāvulaka mūṉṟum* — "the threefold world, endless and beginningless" is explained as "the three worlds that are without end and without beginning". As I had till then been familiar with the conception of the world as a transient phenomenon, this idea was quite new to me. I went on and on reading. But I found it tiring to read on with only that single copy before me.

## Palmleaf copy

On Saturday of that week I went as usual to Tiruvāvaṭuturai, and told Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar about everything that had taken place since my first meeting with Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār. Tēcikar listened and was enthusiastic. "It is an excellent thing to cultivate the acquaintance of such cultured and learned gentleman; you should be very careful in guiding him in his studies; there is in the Mutt a palmleaf copy of the *Cintāmaṇi* copied by Śrī Piḷḷai." He sent for it and gave it to me. Then he dismissed me saying, "As you have to teach Mutaliyār you may please come here only on Saturdays and return there on Sundays."

On my return to Kumpakōṇam I studied the *Cintāmaṇi* with the two copies, the one of Śrī Piḷḷai, and the other given by Mutaliyār, before me. Mutaliyār's copy contained only the original text and a paraphrase. Detailed notes were provided only on a few stanzas in the beginning. But Śrī Piḷḷai's copy contained such special notes for the whole text. I asked myself, 'Of what use is it to copy the paraphrase alone, leaving out completely the detailed commentary? Perhaps the two are two separate commentaries!' On closer examination I found out that both were the work of one and the same commentator. But I still had my basic doubt: why are there in existence such two different copies?

## Unknown matters

The next day I went to Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār and started teaching him. The *Nāmakaḷ Ilampakam* was prescribed for the B. A. examinations in 1870. Mutaliyār who had studied then, put in now here and there some information he had then gathered. While teaching I came across the name 'Kaṭṭiyaṅkāraṉ' I did not know that it was the proper name of a person; so I read it 'kaṭṭiyakkāraṉ' (a herald, a common noun). At that moment Mutaliyār said, "I know only the story as told in *Nāmakaḷ Ilampakam*; the word should be read Kaṭṭiyaṅkāraṉ; it is the name of one of the ministers of Caccantaṉ; it is he who killed Caccantaṉ." Subsequently, I came across the name 'Kōvintaṉ' (*Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, 187, commentary). This is one of the names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but I had no idea whom it denoted in *Cintāmaṇi*. Mutaliyār did not know either. There were more matters like this which were not clear to me. I admitted that there were things in the text which were unknown to me, and proposed to approach those who might know. Mutaliyār appreciated the fact that I did not pretend to know things which I did not, adding thus to the prevailing confusion. A few scholars attended, too, our *Cintāmaṇi* class. Five months went like this.

As *Cintāmaṇi* was a Jaina literary work I felt that the Jains would be the best source of information about the things we did not know, and so one day I asked Rāmaliṅka Paṇṭāram whom I was teaching at home, "Do some Jains live here in the neighbourhood? Do you know some that had received reasonable education?"

"There are several Jaina houses in the street to the west of Irāmacāmi temple", he said. "All of them are well-to-do. There are well-educated men among them." Hearing this, I felt like going to see them at once.

## Cantiranāta Ceṭṭiyār

Next day, according to my wish, Rāmaliṅka Paṇṭāram took me to the street he had mentioned, inhabited by some Jains. There he introduced me to Cantiranāta Ceṭṭiyār, a man he knew personally. The entrance to the house was decorated with rice-flour *kōlams*. The lintels were adorned with festoons of mango leaves. It occurred to us that some auspicious function had to be going on that day. We went in. A number of people were gathered in the central hall. Rāmaliṅka Paṇṭāram pointed to one of them. "This gentleman is Mr. Cantiranāta Ceṭṭiyār", he said and introduced me to him.

"Your place is all decked out with banana leaves and evergreens — do you celebrate something?" I asked.

He answered, "We have finished *Cintāmaṇi* recital today. That's what we celebrate here."

I was stunned. I thought: 'What! We've come to ask about *Cintāmaṇi*, and he says they have just completed it! It seems that it is their custom to organize regular recitals of that work,' I asked: "Did you read through the *Cintāmaṇi?*"

"Oh yes. I was one of the audience. This gentleman here did the exposition", he answered and pointed out a man sitting opposite to us. Then he informed us, "He belongs to the village of Vīṭūr in Tiṇṭivaṉam Taluk. He is an authority on Jaina scriptures and commentaries in Tamil, Sanskrit and Prakrit. There is no one anywhere equal to him. His very much respected name is Appācāmi Nāyiṉār." It occurred to me that he had come there all the way just for my own benefit! 'Whenever I set out to enquire about something', I thought with tremendous joy, 'I run unexpectedly into the greatest authority on that subject. And there is a function going on here specially in celebration of that same thing. Surely that is divine providence!'

"How long has that gentleman been here?" I asked.

"This reading and exposition has gone on for six months."

'I have wasted these six months!' I thought with regrets.

The great scholar was very modest, and of quiet and gentle speech. I told him I had myself taken up the study of *Cintāmaṇi*. "I find the name 'Kōvintaṉ' in the text. Whose name is that?" I asked.

His answer was casual. "Kōvintaṉ is the brother of Vicayai. Vicayai is the wife of Caccataṉ." I asked him about some other doubtful points. I got complete and clear answers. This raised my hopes that I secured a proper guide for the study of *Cintāmaṇi*. Cantiranāta Ceṭṭiyār, too, explained a few things to me. He also gave me the story in outline.

### Things understood

From that day, Cantiranāta Ceṭṭiyār became a good friend of mine. I understood that just as we hold readings of epics like the *Rāmāyaṇam* and celebrate Rāma's coronation, so do the Jains regard *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* and celebrate the completion of the reading of that book with joyous festivities. Among those who study it by tradition, there exists a commentary given orally. They recite it. That commentary is in the *maṇipravāḷa* diction, and is mixed with a lot of technical jargon pertaining to religious matters. I used to listen with pleasure as Cantiranāta Ceṭṭiyār quoted parts of it now and then for me.

In various places in the commentary on *Cintāmaṇi*, Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar quotes different stanzas of the same text as illustrations. Unless one has studied the entire text thoroughly and committed it to one's memory one is unable to say where these various illustrative stanzas belong. I asked Cantiranāta Ceṭṭiyār about these poetic portions; and, like a lightning, he at once indicated the proper place and quoted the whole stanza, just like that. When it came to *Cintāmaṇi* that man was a real encyclopaedia.

Appācāmi Nayiṉār stayed on in Kumpakōṇam even after the festival of having completed the *Cintāmaṇi* was over. Then he returned to his village, but used to come to Kumpakōṇam from time to time. I always went to see him on these occasions, and used to ask him about matters pertaining to Jaina traditions and Jaina religious philosophy.

As a result of my association with the Jaina friends I discovered why there were two versions of the commentary in the manuscript copies. Naccinārkkiniyar, it is said, first wrote a commentary on *Cintāmaṇi*. But then, when he showed it to the Jains, reading it out for them, they stated that parts of it were in conflict with the Jaina tradition. He therefore went to a Jaina monastery at a place called Cirrāmpūr, pretended to be a Jain, stayed there for some time, studied Jaina texts and Jaina observances, went back and wrote a new commentary. I was informed that the manuscript with the special notes was the one which he had written later.

Thus I learned many things by listening to the oral transmission which I could not have discovered by mere study of the text. I came to know the history of the author, Tiruttakka Tēvar, only in this manner.

Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār continued his study with me. As occasion arose, he expressed his admiration at the beauty of the text of *Cintāmaṇi*, and at the excellence of the commentary. In the gloss on the first poem of *Kōvintaiyār Ilampakam*, the phrase *vīranrāṇilal* — the shade of the feet of Vīran was interpreted as *camavacaraṇam*, and I did not know what was the meaning of that compound. Should I leave it like that — unintelligible? I went to Cantiranāta Ceṭṭiyār and asked. He explained that Camavacaraṇam denotes a large Jaina temple. It is composed of many different parts, said Ceṭṭiyār and added, "The house of Kuṇapāla Ceṭṭiyār stands just opposite mine. There is a diagram of Camavacaraṇam in his house. If you will examine it, you will understand fully what I mean."

## Pavyajīvan

Accordingly I went to that house, met Kuṇapāl Ceṭṭiyār and spoke to him. He showed me the diagram of Camavacaraṇam. I got a clear idea of its component parts. Kuṇapāla Ceṭṭiyār was a man well familiar with Jaina traditions. His wife knew even more about them than he.

On the day I went to their house and was shown the picture of Camavacaraṇam, I enquired about some other matters concerning Jainism. He explained to me all that he knew, and then brought his wife to throw light on further matters. She was the sister of Taraṇi Ceṭṭityār, a famous authority on matters Jaina. It was through her that I knew a number of important things. From the way I put my questions, the lady decided that I was well-versed in Jaina lore, and she said to her husband, "This gentleman seems to be *pavyajīvan!*" According to the Jaina doctrines, this term denotes a soul ready for grace. I felt then as happy as Naccinārkkiniyar must have been when he completed a commentary that met with full approval of the Jains. I felt that, that scholarly lady had thus testified to my fitness to enter upon further research on *Cintāmaṇi*.

## Camuttira Vijayam Ceṭṭiyār

I also got acquainted with Camuttira Vijayam Ceṭṭiyār, a very wealthy nephew of Taraṇi Ceṭṭiyār who lived in the same street as my Jaina friend. I was able, with his help, to borrow a few more Jaina books.

## Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's commentary

As I was in constant touch with the Jains and their literature, the splendour of *Cintāmaṇi* began to grow upon me day by day. I realized that this was the touchstone against which one should rub the merit of all classical Tamil poetry. The grandeur of its flow and the brilliance and power of its diction captivated totally my mind.

From Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's commentary I was learning ever fresh things. And yet I have two small points against him. He makes many cross-references in his attempts to explain the meanings. He connects a word that occurs in one passage with another in a context many stanzas ahead, leaving us in the dark about either. Whenever such thing happens, it is vexing and annoying to read his commentary. When he quotes illustrations as authority in proof of a fact or usage, he never gives the source of those quotations. "So say others too" is what he writes and leaves it at that. If such a quotation happens to be taken from a stanza in *Cintāmaṇi*, Cantiranāta Ceṭṭiyār is there for me. But what to do if it is from any other work! Not one of the illustrations he has quoted was taken from any of the books I had studied. I was perplexed and confused, as the body of writing on which he drew for support seemed to me a universe in itself. I would exclaim in bewilderment, "Why can't this man mention at least the name of that work?" However, I did not forget the eminence of his commentatorial abilities. He performed a great service, explaining a point briefly, and then, whenever there was an acute matter to be discussed, he would write about it most beautifully. The analysis of individual words he had produced affords the keenest pleasure. One must admit that he has an ocean-wide erudition as to the range of his reading. Considering such greatness, the two defects I had mentioned above dim into insignificance.

## The pleasure of *Cintāmaṇi*

The special study of *Cintāmaṇi* which I began just for teaching Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār grew into a hobby giving me much pleasure. I was immersed in this reading of *Cintāmaṇi* at all hours not devoted to teaching at the College or at home. I had read before that the Emperor Anapāya Cōḻan, having got acquainted with *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, was so completely lost in its beauties that Cēkkiḻār had to point out to him, almost threateningly that, after all, the book was based on an imaginative Jaina story! I readily believed that it was indeed so; that there was, in that maginificent poem, a poetic splendour which had enchanted and stolen the heart of the Cōḻa Emperor. What do we care if it is just an imaginary tale, a 'heretical phantasy' as we are told? It is the beauty of a Tamil work of art that we appreciate — beauty of content, beauty of expression; when we have here a magnificent poem that has plenty of both, who is there to hinder us reading and enjoying it?

## My promise

We were half through Cintāmaṇi's *Kāntaruvatattaiyār Ilampakam* in our study. At that time Mutaliyār resigned his job and set out with his family for Madras, with the intention to set up as a lawyer and live a life free form restraints.

As he was about to leave he came to my house and said: "You have by now well realized what an outstanding work *Cintāmaṇi* is. You must save this splendid epic from neglect or oblivion. Try to obtain a few more versions and get it published in print! There is no greater service than this." I promised. I said, "I shall do so, I shall do everything that is in my powers." He then took leave of me.

# Chapter 90

## Acquaintances and Research

The citizens of Kumpakōṇam lacked a common ground where the gentlemen of the town could meet for their evening talks; nothing like that was provided although the place was a large town. The lecturers at the college desired to have a city hall. Gopal Rao and a few others planned to establish a city hall in memory of Mr. Porter who had been the principal of Kumpakōṇam College. Cātu Cēṣaiyar and R. V. Śrīnivācaiyar were greatly involved in this matter. So, a committee was formed, under the executive chairmanship of Śrīnivācaiyar, to lay foundations to a city hall named after Mr.Porter; the committee was elected in a large meeting of the townspeople.

### Exchange of ground

The committee has chosen a ground on which to build the city hall. It was called Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa Puram, and it was inhabited by fishermen community. As it was the property of Tiruviṭaimarutūr Temple, the ultimate owner was Mutt of Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai. As the members of the committee deliberated how to arrange for the purchase of that ground from the Mutt, Śrīnivācaiyar came up with the suggestion: "The Tamil Pandit at our college is a person very much in favour with Mutt. We could send him to take care of the transaction." And he informed me of the whole matter.

There was an uncertainity about the whole matter: Is the Head of the Mutt entitled to sell landed property? A few who seemed to be knowledgeable were convinced that he was not. A few others suggested a soulution. "If a corresponding strip of land would be bought in exchange for the one that's going to be sold there should be no obstacle or objection to selling." When this expedient was accepted, it was decided that Śrīnivācaiyar and a few other gentlemen, including me, should be sent to Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai to negotiate the purchase.

Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar showed utmost politeness to everyone. The lecturers could see, hearing him talking, how well-educated he was in literature. He asked me to read a few passages from the great commentary on *Civañāṉapōtam* and from *Tolkāppiyam*,and offered his lucid explanation. He sprinkled his exposé with quotations of Sanskrit *ślokas* and aphorisms from Sanskrit grammar, and everyone was duly impressed. My colleagues said openly about me, listening to Tēcikar's talk and my readings, "Our pandit is a good scholar, and speaks well; he has had good training." And when it came to the transaction, Tēcikar bought another stretch of land, as suggested, and made arrangements for the transfer of the pertinent ground on which to build the city hall, in the name of Porter.

Although I did not really participate in any important way in this transaction, the citizens of Kumpakōṇam gained somehow the impression that it was only because of me that they were able to obtain that particular stretch of land so easily, and as a consequence I gained in status in their eyes. It was Gopala Rao who laid the foundation stone to the city hall. Necessary funds were raised from the common people, and they started the construction of the hall.

### Farewell for Gopala Rao

In 1882, Gopala Rao was transferred by the Presidency authorities to Presidency College in Madras. He was a man who had earned great esteem of everyone as a professor active for long years at the College of Kumpakōṇam. Although the students tended to behave towards him with fearful and awesome attitudes, deep in their hearts they had a special affection for him. The main reason for it was his unquestionable excellence. Everyone praised his personal achievement in studies, his distinction in examinations, and the spotless, objectively critical way with which he watched the work of the lecturers. When he was teaching Shakespeare's dramas the students would listen with such absorbed attention that they looked like immobile statues. His words were precise and crystal clear, he had an uncanny capability to know exactly the degree of his students' knowledge. His own English learning was excellent. He would constantly read and keep it up. He also was well-versed in a few Tamil books. Whatever he read he would keep in memory since his reading was thorough, precise and deep. Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār had told me how really well he knew the few Tamil books he had studied, like *Naṉṉūl* and the *Kuṟaḷ*. That I was able to find out directly for myself. Before Ceṭṭiyār joined Kumpakōṇam College, Gopala Rao used to conduct Tamil classes for some time himself. It was he who recognized Ceṭṭiyār's abilities and offered him the College job.

He was convinced that one should do one's job with total dedication and with indefatigable effort. It was his custom to write down into his books as a motto the following maxim from the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* as a reminder,

*arumai yuṭaitteṉ ṟacavāmai vēṇṭum*
*perumai muyaṟci tarum*

"Yield not to the feebleness saying, 'This is difficult to do.
The effort itself will give the necessary greatness."

The departure of someone so much devoted to Tamil was to me a cause of great regret. He too regretted to some extent the fact that he was going to leave Kumpakōṇam College to which he has been attached for so many years. The citizens of Kumpakōṇam learned with great sadness that the great man was going to leave them for Madras.

The teachers as well as his many friends decided to hold a special farewell party for him, and this function took place in September 1882. I composed and read out a decad of laudatory stanzas in his honour. While reciting them I could not check my tears. I will give below a few of them.

*"māṟāta vāymaitaṉil maṉaccāṉṟuk kottiyalum*
*māṇpu taṉṉil*
*tēṟāta māṇavark kiṇituviḷaṅ kuṟatteruṭṭum*
*tiṇmai taṉṉil*
*cīṟāta iyalpuṭaiya kōpāla rāyavaṇṇaṟ*
*civaṇuvōryār*
*pēṟāya avaṉperumai mikacciṟiyan nāvoṉṟāṟ*
*pēcaṟ pāṟṟō?"*

In ever unchanging truth
Living up to one's conscience,
In his capacity to explain that
Even dull students
Could understand better,
Never getting angry,
Who is there equal to
Gopala Rayar?
Can I, a small lad,
Speak with a single tongue
His greatness?

*Maṉṉiyanaṟ poruṭkalvi kaṟṟalari tatiṉaritu*
*māṟa aiyam*
*aṉṉiyarpāl viṉavāmai atinaritu māṇākkark*
*kaiyan tīrttal*
*paṉṉiyavā ṟēnaṭatta latiṉariya tivaiiyalpāp*
*paṭaittōṉ aṉpu*
*tuṉṉiyavaṉ ṉaiyainikartta kōpāla rāyappērt*
*tūya ṉammā*

Rare to accomplish good education
Rarer still, not discussing
Doubts with others.
Rarer, clearing the doubts
Of students
Rare to conduct himself as he learnt
All these he has them by nature
He is full with kindness
Like a mother, he is Gopalarāyar

*muṉṉāṭun tiṟamaitaṉil mikavalla turaittaṉattu*
*mutalvar toṇṭai*
*naṉṉāṭu cāṉṟōrai yuṭaitteṉral taṉaipputukka*
*nāṭik kollō*
*ennāṭum pukaḻiṉiya kōpāla rāyavaṇṇal*
*iṇaimik kōṅkum*
*miṉṉāṭum maṇimāṭac ceṉṉainakar varacceyta*
*vitantāṉ maṉṉō*

Is it to prove that
Toṇṭaimaṇṭalam is
Famous for great men, that
Government has asked Gopalarāyar,
Whose explicit efficiency
Is praised every where,
To come to Madras
A city of tall buildings
On whose tops the stars dance?

When the farewell function was over, I went on my own to Gopala Rao's house and said to him, "I have no idea who will be the man to follow you, or how he will be. I would be very obliged to you if you could kindly give me a certificate of good character." He answered, "You don't need to worry about that. Whoever will succeed me will behave towards you in a friendly way. There is no need for another conduct certificate. Take from the College office a copy of the letter which had been written and sent it to the authorities to recommend your appointment. That should be enough." It was obvious that the letter of recommendation which he had written to the authorities about me was rather positive.

Gopala Rao was succeeded as the College Principal by an Englishman, a Mr. Steward.

### Palmleaf copies of Cintāmaṇi

After Cēlam Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār had left for Madras he used to write to me often. In each of the letter he insisted that I should continue my research in *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. I assured him in my answers that I was carrying on the reading and research as he wished. I secured a copy of Bower's printed edition of *Ṉāmakaḷ Ilampakam*. When I wrote to Tiyakarāca Ceṭṭiyār of my study of *Cintāmaṇi*, he sent me, via Śrī Paṭṭāpirāma Piḷḷai, his own copy of the text. That was the copy originally written down by Śrī Piḷḷai. It contained the entire commentary with the special notes.

I copied the entire work in two separate note-books and went on studying it. I had also a few palmleaf manuscripts which Cuppiramaṇya Tēcikar had obtained for me from Tirunelvēli. I compared all these copies and noted down carefully all variants in reading. I also made those who came to my house for classes help me in the work of collation. The College students, too, came to be of assistahce. The work went on rather speedily since four to five students were sitting there always, each with a copy in his hand, on hunt for variants and differences in reading. I would proceed with this textual investigation without the slightest fatigue, whether it was day or night.

Letters from Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār kept coming frequently. He wrote that he was greatly worried about some problems in connection with his pension; he also wanted me to inform the Principal and his former colleagues, and desired to have the matter settled. I did my best to talk about it to those who were supposed to arrange things. But it was only one whole year after he had retired that he received his pension order.

### Tirukkuṭantaip purāṇam

Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār wished to publish such of Śrī Piḷḷai's works as were still unpublished. He had arranged with certain leading citizens of Kumpakōṇam to get the *Tirukkuṭantaippurāṇam* printed first. He reminded me of this often in the letter he wrote from Tiruvāṉaikkā. I approached those who had promised to provide contributions, and sent the money they had given me to Ceṭṭiyār. He had first tried to arrange the printing with Catāvatāṉam Cuppiramaṇya Aiyar of Tanjāvūr who had a prin ting press in Madras, and gave even a small deposit. But it has not come off. Subsequently, it was arranged in the printing press of Cūḷai Cōmacuntara Nāyakar in Madras who had agreed to accept the manuscript, and the script of the *purāṇam* was sent to him. In due time, he sent the proofs to Ceṭṭiyār. But because of his failing sight Ceṭṭiyār sent them on to me after his reading. I read them, made the corrections, and sent them back to Madras. I gave the strike order for print. We published the bare text alone, well arranged and edited. It did not strike me at that time that it was necessary to include notes and explanations to help the readers.

### Beauties in Cintāmaṇi

I was so absorbed in *Cintāmaṇi* and its commentary that I had no inclination for any other work. I tasted again and again the fresh, surprising beauty of that book filling me with delight. As I was reading it over and over again I realized to the full how all subsequent literary works had derived their inspiration of the patterns and structures of poetry from that epic. Each week, as I went to Tiruvāvaṭuturai, I acquainted Cuppiramaṇya Tēcikar with all the beauties as I found them in *Cintāmaṇi*. I also reported that I could not discover the source of many of the quotation occurring in the commentary. He replied, "We have copies in the Mutt of any number of ancient texts. You can look at them, and simply take those you think could be useful to you." I told him I was truly grateful for that offer, and that I would indeed do so.

### Namacivāya Tēcikar

Namacivāya Tēcikar, the Junior Head, learned, too, about my engagement in the study of *Cintāmaṇi* — and was stunned. Not, however, in any fully positive way. The reason for his displeasure was simple: It was a Jaina book! But he praised the excellence of Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's commentary when I told him about it.

He went back to Kalliṭaikkuṟicci to settle down there. He wrote me letters from there. Several times he invited me to spend a few days there with him during College holidays. I could, however, not fulfil his wish.

## Chapter 91

## My Second Publication

One day a young man came to see me, sent by Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār who was by now firmly settled in Tiruvāṉaikkā. Ceṭṭiyār had written to me that he had studied Tamil literature, that he wished to proceed with his studies, and that it would perhaps be possible to send him to Tiruvāvaṭuturai for further studies. He was some five or six years younger than me.

### Tirumāṉūr A. Kiruṣṇaiyar

He belonged to a place called Tirumāṉūr; his name was Kiruṣṇaiyar. He told me that he lived now in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi, that he sought out Ceṭṭiyār in Tiruvāṉaikkā, tried to study with him, found him too weak and too tired to teach; and that Ceṭṭiyār in fact sent him to me. I put him to test. He recited, canto by canto, many stanzas of the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* with admirable ease. I felt that he did, too, understand them, and could follow the meaning. He had a sweet, melodious voice. His handwriting was neat. And he was apparently a sincere devotee of Śiva. I thought: we could indeed make something out of him. He could be later of great use.

I was convinced that he was very keen to study Tamil in depth, and so I took him along to Tiruvāvaṭuturai and presented him to Śrī Cuppiramaṇya Tēcikar. He stayed, and took up his studies of Tamil with Tēcikar and with Maturai Irāmacāmi Piḷḷai who was in those days the *vidvān* of the Mutt. Whenever I came there during my weekly visits I would see him and talk to him. I was happy to see how he developed; his learning was growing steadily.

After some time it appeared necessary to appoint a Tamil Pandit in the Mahantu High School in Vēlūr. Kiruṣṇaiyar applied. I wrote letters to a few proper persons. He got that job. He was a good teacher. He used to write to me often. However, in his letters he often expressed his wish to be rather studying at Tiruvāvaṭuturai than being in a job bound by rules and regulations; during holidays he would come to Kumpakōṇam, help me with the scrutiny of the manuscripts, and make himself useful in other ways.

### The death of Namacivāya Tēcikar

In the beginning of 1883, Namacivāya Tēcikar, the Junior Head, reached the end of his earthly existence at Kalliṭaikkuṟicci. Everyone connected with the Mutt felt inconsolable grief. He had been in many ways qualified to adorn the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt as its future Head, particularly as he was such a splendid scholar in Tamil. Everyone had hoped that he would be a worthy successor to the learned and illustrious Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and maintain the reputation of the Mutt unimpaired. He was an outstanding administrator. He had not only looked after the estates at Kalliṭaikkuṟicci with great competence, but had managed to buy many additional villages. Everyone looked forward with great hopes to the Mutt becoming rich in both material and spiritual wealth under his forthcoming administration. However, man proposes, God disposes. What can we do!

As soon as I heard the news I went to the Mutt and saw Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. Being of a supremely detached nature he has not shown any outburst of grief. "We considered him a supremely capable person and a man of deep learning", he said briefly. "The Holy Heart of Śrī Ṇamacivāya Mūrtti is like this." I have studied a few texts with Namacivāya Tēcikar. In several letters which he had written to me before he died he pressed me to come to Kalliṭaikkuṟicci. I was unable to go; and when I thought about this and remembered my study with him I felt very sad.

### Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai

Rao Bahadur Ci. Vai. Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai of Jaffna was at that time living in Madras. He was engaged in the effort of publishing in print *Tolkāppiyam* and other ancient books. He also brought out *Vīracōḻiyam.* Subsequently he began publishing *Iṟaiyaṉār Akapporuḷ* with commentary and *Tiruttaṇikaippurāṇam.* Having come to know of the existence of ancient palmleaf manuscripts at Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt, he applied to the Head of the monastery for their loan. Cuppiramaṇya Tēcikar showed me his letters, and told me to try to find out if indeed there were copies of the texts which he would like to have, available in the library. Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai asked for *Iṟaiyaṉār Akapporuḷ.* He wrote that he has not got in particular the latter portion of the commentary on the 59th aphorism of that book, and could we kindly send it if available. When I searched in the stacks I found an old copy of the commentary on that text. The text he wanted was available in full. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar sent that copy to Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai at once.

### The first letter

I wrote to Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai to inform him that Tēcikar had sent to him the palmleaf manuscript as he desired, and I added, "When I was studying *Taṇikaippurāṇam* with Śrī Piḷḷai, he was making use of the synopsis prepared by Maturai Irāmacāmi Piḷḷai. It is quite all right and you may use it." Thus far I have not written to Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai. Having received my letter he was obviously very pleased for he answered at once. I quote here a few passages from his letter:

".... While I expect to arrive within a few days at Kumpakōṇam hoping to acquire your precious friendship I have been thinking constantly whether I shall receive from someone there a letter to introduce me to you, and lo, God himself has listened to my request, and you have written to me causing me indescribable joy as I keep thinking of it all the time. On the third day after you had graciously written to me, a copy of *Iṟaiyaṉār Akapporuḷ* sent with the kind permission of His Holiness has arrived by mail including the final part of the commentary on the 59th *sūtra,* and seeing it I have experienced immense pleasure.

I intend to have a brief biography of Śrīlaśrī Kacciyappa Cuvāmi printed at the beginning of the *Tiruttaṇikaippurāṇam* and therefore I would be immensely grateful to you if you or Śrīmat Irāmacāmi Piḷḷai would kindly write it out as soon as possible and send it to me. I request kind permission to mention the authorship of whoever would oblige by writing it out and sending it to me.

I shall give you all details concerning the above-mentioned on meeting you in person.

May your friendship which was born in the month of Paṅkuṉi grow and prosper like Paṟkuṉaṉ.

Faithfully,

Madras, *your servant*
25-3-1883 **Ci. Vai. Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai.**"

As soon as the two books, *Iṟaiyaṉār Akapporuḷ* and *Taṇikaippurāṇam,* were published, Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai sent printed copies to me and to Tiruvāvaṭuturai. Although he had obtained the notes on *Taṇikaip purāṇam* from Irāmacāmi Piḷḷai, for some reason he did not have them published. I thought, 'How strange that he has not made use of the excellent material given by Śri Piḷḷai. But he seems not to know how to utilize a good thing when he has got it!' I must say that Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar was of the same opinion.

I was rather pleased to hear that Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai intended to settle down in Kumpakōṇam. As Cēlam Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār had said, those who were content with reading later Tamil literary works did not bother to study or examine the ancient classics, and so there was no one in the whole of Tamilnadu to join me in such work as I did. And I was very new to this kind of research. Still, I was determined to somehow find things for myself. In such a situation I was naturally delighted to know that someone who was trying to renunciate ancient Tamil classics in print was coming to live in Kumpakōṇam.

### Tirukkuṭantaippurāṇam

Along with the research into the *Cintāmaṇi*, I prepared the *Tirukkuṭantaippurāṇam* for print. After I had compared the Sanskrit original with the Tamil version, it appeared that the translation needed few corrections. I informed Ceṭṭiyār about it. He wrote back that it was our duty to see that no blame would come to the hallowed memory of Śri Piḷḷai. So, wherever there was a slight correction to be made, I made it most carefully and sensitively. I read the proofs and saw to it that the types would be all right, and I learned a lot about printing; nevertheless, it was a time when the mere fact that a work appeared in print was already a mark of great prestige. And I did not yet know how to make a publication look truly attractive. The *purāṇam* was published in June 1883. Cōmacuntara Nāyakar has kindly written a prefatory stanza for that edition, which was prepared for print jointly by Tiyākarāca Cettiyār and myself. Cōmacuntara Nāyakar mentions this as in the following verse.

*tiruva ruṅkalaic cāmināta tappeyar cērnta*
*poruva rumperu maṟaiyavaṉ kalaiyuṇar pulamai*
*oruva rumpukaḻt tiyākarā cappeya ruravōṉ*
*iruva rumpatip pittunal kiṉarila kuṟavē*

> The Brahmin by name of
> Caminātaṉ, scholar in arts
> Rare and beautiful,
> And Tiyākarācaṉ, a patron
> Scholar in arts and of
> Unique fame,
> Both edited and gave it
> To the world, to shine bright

This book was the second publication which I had edited. I felt a limitless satisfaction that I could earn the merit of publishing Śrī Piḷḷai's work. Not only that. I had made a solemn vow that I would prepare the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* for print. My only worry was to fulfil that promise as well, as possible. If Śrī Piḷḷai would have been alive, he would certainly have been of help and advice, his affection and erudition encouraging me greatly. Even though he was not there, I considered it a good omen that I had first prepared his work for print, and then only began seriously with my editorial work on *Cintāmaṇi*. Such were the circumstances; it had worked like that. Among the *purāṇams* which Śrī Piḷḷai had composed, the *Mayūrāppurāṇam* and the *Tirunākaikkārōṇappurāṇam* were printed at Madras during his lifetime itself. Following the publication of those two *purāṇams* came the edition of the *Kuṭantaip purāṇam*. It was marvellous — the text, preceded by the prefatory stanzas, and the quotations from *Tēvāram*. I looked at it lovingly again and again, thinking about Śrī Piḷḷai. When Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar saw the edition he was full of praise. "It would be fitting if all of the books he had composed would be published like this!" he exclaimed. And I thought, 'I should be graced with such an opportunity.'

# Chapter 92

## Research in Cintāmaṇi

While I was making a close study of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, I had no idea at all what were the books from which Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar quoted verses here and there in his commentary. I knew only the *sūtras* from *Tolkāppiyam*. He had also quoted a few stanzas from *Tirukkōvaiyār* and *Tirukkuṟaḷ*. I knew these, too. When, however, I read the rest of the quotations, I was completely lost with regard both to the source as well as the purpose of such quotations.

### Other ancient Tamil texts

I moved in a certain direction: I wanted to find out what other works like the *Cintāmaṇi* had ceased to be current in Tamilnadu. Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār had given me his copy of *Cilappatikāram* at the time he left for Madras. After reaching the city, he sent me a copy of *Maṇimēkalai*, at my request.

When I applied myself to the search for the copies of ancient books, the library at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai came to my mind. On a free Saturday and Sunday I went there with the intention to search for whatever old classic would be available there, and I informed Tēcikar about it. "Haven't we already told you to search through the whole lot," he said, "and take whatever you may need?".

I began to search among bundles of old palm leaf texts which were there. Some of the palm leaves were very old; when one touched them, they felt sticky and fragile. On one bundle was written 'Eṭṭut tokai', and 'seems to be *Caṅkam* books'; it was Kumāracāmit Tampirāṉ who had tied up the bundle separately and inscribed it. When I took it and looked at it I found it to be *Naṟṟiṇai* and other *Caṅkam* books — the plain texts. I had guessed that *Eṭṭuttokai* ('Eight Anthologies') had become *Ēṭṭuttokai* ('Collections of palmleaves'). The eight texts of *Naṟṟiṇai*, *Kuṟuntokai*, *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, *Patiṟṟuppattu*, *Paripāṭal*, *Kalittokai*, *Akanāṉuṟu* and *Puṟanāṉūṟu* make up the *Eṭṭuttokai* Anthology. I knew the name of the anthology from an old verse. In that bundle I found palm leaf manuscript of the basic texts of all the collections. *Kalittokai* and *Paripāṭal* were not in it.

Along with this *Eṭṭuttokai* I found another palm leaf script which had belonged to Srī Piḷḷai. In his days he used to spread it from time to time in the sun. The first text in it was called *Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai*. When he was asked, "What sort of book is it?", Master would only say, "It is an *Āṟṟuppaṭai* like *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai*". At that time I did not feel any desire to see what else that manuscript contained. It was that very copy which I now found in the library of the Mutt. Under the name *Pattuppāṭṭu* were gathered in it the ten texts of *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai*, *Kuṟiñcip pāttu*, *Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai*, *Ciṟupāṇaṟṟuppaṭai*, *Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaṭai*, *Mullaippāṭṭu*, *Maturaikkāñci*, *Neṭunalvāṭai*, *Paṭṭiṉappālai* and *Malaipaṭukatām*. *Eṭṭuttokai and Pattupāṭṭu* are the most prominent works of the period of the last *Caṅkam*. However, I did not know at that time the name *Pattuppāṭṭu*, or indeed what poems made up that collection.

I did not study in detail the manuscript which contained the *Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai*. There was also an incomplete manuscript which contained the Eighteen Minor works. And, in addition, another ancient manuscript of *Cintāmaṇi*. I took the whole lot along to Kumpakōṇam.

## An unique universe

I realized that for editing the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, a reading and a study of that book alone would not be sufficient, and that a study and a knowledge of other ancient works were necessary for a clear understanding of the meaning of *Cintāmaṇi*. I wrote out separately the quotations which were found in the commentary on *Cintāmaṇi* and scanned them again and again. In this way I knew them all by heart. Some of them were found in those ancient palmleaves. When I discovered them I was as happy as if I had come across a veritable treasure-trove. I then continued my study.

When I tried to read them, these works did not appear to me easy to understand. It was as if they would have been written in an altogether different language of their own. Nevertheless, I did not give up. I went on reading. Many of these poems occurred in the commentaries on *Tolkāppiyam*. Step by step a conviction was gaining strength in me that this collection of texts constituted a unique literature in its own.

While reading the *Akanāṉūṟu* I numbered the pieces in it and made an alphabetical list of rare words and phrases occurring in the text. Then I consulted my alphabetical list to find out whether it included those rare words and phrases contained in the examples about which Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar had indicated, 'So have said others'. I could identify one or two. I would take such stanza and scrutinize it. I would make out the meaning of such poem with the help of the commentary on *Cintāmaṇi* composed by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar. Absorbed in it fully, I would read it once, twice, three times. Slowly the scenes of a new world of *Caṅkam* literature arose before my eyes, like a mountain enveloped in mists. In spite of the misty film spreading over it and the fact that I could only form an idea of the summit and girth of that mountain without really seeing it clearly, the wealth of content of those poems in the *Caṅkam* texts appeared to me 'vaster than the earth, higher than the skies; and deeper than the waters of the ocean'. In the beginning part of the commentary on *Cintāmaṇi* are found the words, "so they say in the Akam". That very verse indeed occurred in the *Akanāṉūṟu*.

As my research continued like this, I felt that I had better wait till I know much more, in a way, almost everything, and then only begin with the printing of *Cintāmaṇi*. I read the *Cintāmaṇi* many times, again and again; studying other texts in between, I jotted down many notes.

## The Tañcavūr version

I kept on asking everyone I knew whether palmleaf copies of *Cintāmaṇi* could be had anywhere. I made these frequent enquiries in the hope that I would obtain a copy free from errors which would throw light on passages that still remained suspicious; I also wrote letters to a number of people. It came to my knowledge that a millionaire by name Viruṣapatāca Mutaliyār of Tañcāvūr had in his house many ancient palmleaf manuscripts. I then began my pilgrimage to search for ancient manuscripts; it has not yet ceased. I went to Tañcāvūr and taking along some local gentlemen of standing went to Mutaliyār's house. He was a Jain. He had a lot of sacred Jaina texts. In his family shrine-room he worshipped a copy of *Cintāmaṇi* is not to be lightly seen or read by you. You should get initiated by a proper preceptor and then only study its teachings. To give the book to someone of different faith would be for us a sin".

I tried all possible arguments. *Cintāmaṇi* contained matters that would delight everyone in Tamilnadu if they could read it; I regretted that secretive mentality which makes people convinced that a work of literary art may be the property of only one community and should be hidden from others. How many books have possibly disappeared, hidden away, removed from the world at large because of religious bigotry like this! When will the time come when people will have a change of heart, concealing never more from others the writings of the great men of bygone age meant to shed lustre on the Tamil language? I was desperate.

One of the persons who came along said to Viruṣapatāca Mutaliyār that I was a member of the teaching staff at Kumpakōṇam College, and that I was closely associated with the Mutt of Tiruvāvaṭuturai. He was of the opinion that if Mutaliyār knew who I really was, he would no longer object to showing me the book. This had, however, just the opposite effect. "So!" exclaimed Mutaliyār. "It certainly is most inappropriate that those connected with a Saiva monastery should be interested in Jaina scriptures! Saivites have nothing but contempt for the Jains! I will never give the book to you!" My friend was shocked and blamed himself, saying, "Dear me, everything has gone wrong!"

I said I would come again, and made enquiries to find someone in Tañcāvūr who could persuade Mutaliyār to show his book to me. Finally I took with me a wealthy Marāṭha friend of mine by name of Tukārām Holkār, and approached Viruṣapatāca Mutaliyār anew. His heart has fortunately softened. He gave me his copy. What had cost me so much trouble to obtain proved to be an indifferent copy; it did not even have the special commentary.

## Bewildering matters

Having tried in this way I was able to secure in my search twenty-three manuscripts of *Cintāmaṇi*. I have compared and collated all of them. Observing them carefully and repeatedly, many things became clear. But there was no end in sight of a whole ocean of variants. The gentlemen-scribes, letting their minds wander wild, had worked havoc with the scripts.

There was no way to determine whether it is a *kompu* or a *cuḻi*. There was no dot to denote a consonant. One could not distinguish between the symbol used for long ā and the combination *ra*. The word *carapam* looked like *cāpam*, *cāpam* became *carapam*. There was the word *caraṭu* in one place which for a long time I kept reading as *cāṭu*. I mistook *taraṉ* for *tāṉ*. One part of the text said, "as the elephant is born of *nākam.*" I was reading, thinking, wondering, rereading. I had heard that elephants were traditionally classified as belonging to forest areas, or riversides, or mountain-slopes; these three kinds. The term *nākam* could stand for 'mountain', and the elephants referred to belong probably to hill-slopes. A friend, however, was doubtful; he said, "Perhaps in Jaina mythology elephants are born from the wombs of the Nāgas! Why not?" I could only laugh in reply, and said, "It is not clear whether an elephant is born of a serpant *(nākam)* or in hell *(narakam)!*"

Naccinārkkiniyar writes, "Because the elephant is born in hell, it is natural to bow down to it." Those who are defeated in a music competition by Kāntaruvaṭattaị are described like this:

> "icaiyiṉi ḷivaṭkut tōṟṟam yāṉaiyāl
> veṟumeṉṉiṉ icaivatoṉ ṟaṉu kaṇṭir
>
> > "In music we were defeated by her; to cope
> > with her therefore with elephants we have no hope!"

Naccinārkkiṉiyar could refer to the elephants because these men had indeed no chance to engage in a contest employing elephants and winning it. However, I felt that it would all be easier to understand if there would be some link between 'music' and 'elephants'. As I thought about it, it suddenly dawned on me; I was certain that the reading should be, "as the elephant is born of *nātam* (sound of music)". However, in many copies, the word was beyond doubt *nākam*. Only in one single manuscript I discovered, clearly, *nātam!*

In the same way, I stumbled over the word *kuruti* (blood) taking it for *kunti*. In one context I found, *tiruttaṅkumārpaṉ, puṉalāṭṭilē uyirpōkiṉṟa namalikkut tāṉum varuntip pancāṭcaramākiya mantirattaik koṭuttapaṭiyum*. "He who bore on his chest Goddess Śrī, feeling sorry for the dog as it was about to lose its life in the flood, imported to the five-letter mantra *(pancāṭcaram)*." At once I was doubtful: This is a Jaina book; how has the Śaiva five-letter spell entered into this text? In the original texts we read, "imported nectar to the dog". In the notes, the word 'nectar' *(amirtu)* was explained as 'the five-letter spell'. I first decided that the word *amirtu* 'nectar' should be interpreted in that context simply as *mantiram*, and that the copyist, being a Saiva, had added 'five-letter' to *mantiram* on his own. As I read on I found, in line 946, a reference to "the nectar composed of five words". From the commentary pertaining to another passage it became clear that what was meant was the words used for fivefold obeisance. I asked my Jaina friends for clarification. They at once explained the matter to me quite easily: "It was the tradition to designate as 'fivefold obeisance' the words used in prostrating in front of the five Groups of Worthies: the arhats, the siddhas, the preceptors, the teachers and the devotees."

Being confused and unsettled like this repeatedly has never tired or troubled me. On the contrary, it only produced increased efforts. If some fact or other, some quotation, some variant reading, previously unknown or misunderstood, yielded to correct and clear interpretation, all the tribulations I had passed through previously were forgotten; and my zest would increase ten times.

The indiscriminate use of the 'soft' *r*sound and the 'hard' *r*sound resulting in many variant readings proved a frequent stumbling block. On many troublesome occasions I could not distinguish between the original text, the commentary, and the illustrations. There were many instances when I could not find out the exact shape of the stanzas redone by Naccinārkkiniyar in prose order. Many were the cases when I was so confused that I could not find a way how to decide for this or that reading among the variants occuring in different manuscripts. Often it happened that I had text without a commentary, or a commentary without a text. Frequently I was helpless finding the commentator quoting an authority for I did not know what. Many times I got stuck, unable to proceed with my reading and research, because I could not understand some subtle points concerning Jainism. On many occasions I was perplexed while trying to make out some grammatical problem.

By the grace of the Lord, all these confusions, obstacles, difficulties, perplexities and hindrances got resolved day by day and little by little as I continued my rumblings in the poetic groves of *Cintāmaṇi*. The confidence surged in me that my solemn vow and determination to publish the work will be fulfilled.

## Chapter 93

## Three kinds of gain

I could do nothing but be supremely content since, due to the genuine affection which both my colleagues and the students at Kumpakōṇam College had for me, my work went smoothly ahead. From time to time I went to Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai, and these visits to the Mutt increased my efforts. A number of friends, notably Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār and Cēlam Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār, wrote to me frequently. Their letters gave me almost the same pleasure as if I would have talked to them in person.

### Redeemed land

My father took care of everything, so that I had nothing to worry about with regard to family and household matters. Only very few people have such a sense of responsibility for the family as he had, or such a well-ordered mind. He practiced an utmost careful economy, saving through chit funds. Because of his efforts, we could, early in 1884, pay Rs. 770 and redeem from mortgage a piece of land that was our ancestral property. It had been a cause of great regret to father that the land which was a property of our family for long generations had passed on to strange hands. However, for a long time he was not in a position to redeem it. As soon as, by God's grace, I got my position, he saved and saved, and the first thing he did with the money was to get that piece of land back. That made him happier than if he could buy a new land.

### Cēlam Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār

Under such circumstances I moved ahead with my *Cintāmaṇi* research in good tempo. I informed by letters Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār about the progress of my work, and he would express his great pleasure in his regular answers. He wrote in a letter dated October 30, 1880: "... Your letter informs me that you have finished reading the whole of *Cintāmaṇi* once, and that a few doubts still remain. It seems to me that when you have read it once more, most of such doubts would resolve themselves. Only God knows when it will be possible for me to read that book with you again. At present, I can only hope that one day we shall both read it together." His admiration and attachment to *Cintāmaṇi* has been applied to me, too: I felt great desire to go to Madras, so that I could spend with Mutaliyār some time.

Meanwhile I went to see once Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār. When I discussed *Cintāmaṇi* with him, he praised me to high heavens; he was very happy. He was able to bring to memory a few of those illustrations in the commentary which could not be identified as belonging to *Tirukkōvaiyār.* I noted all down. He got through print the *Pūvāḷūrppurāṇam*, and I wrote a laudatory verse for it as he had wished.

## Makāmakam

The Makāmakam festival of March 1885 was there. Innumerable pilgrims gathered in Kumpakōṇam. Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār arrived, too. Śrī Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar left Tiruvāvaṭuturai with his retinue, entered the town, and settled in his Mutt in Fort Street. A number of artists, scholars and important men came to see him and talk to him. I was in those days with him almost constantly, and thus was introduced once again to many new acquaintances.

I felt that I should express my gratitude to the Mutt by the offering of some sort of *dharma;* it was the Mutt which had fostered me for many days, and I wanted to offer, on a suitable occasion, part of my regular income to it somehow. I realized my wish during that Makāmakam festival. I offered a hundred rupees to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and said, "Let this be used for the Māheśvara pūcai in the Mutt." He was moved and happy. "You certainly need not do this, being a child of our Mutt!" he said. I replied appropriately. After the Makāmakam festival came to an end, Tēcikar, on the verge of his departure for Tiruvāvaṭuturai, presented my father and me with gold cloth, and my son Cirañcīvi Kalyāṇacuntaram with a golden jewel called Moon String.

## Mattiyārccuṉa Māṉmiyam

There was a steward of the Mutt by the name of Cuppiramaṇiyat Tampirāṉ, who was also in charge of the temple of Śrī Makāliṅkacuvāmi at Tiruviṭaimarutūr, and while he was giving to the Head of the Mutt an account of the improvements he had affected in that holy place, he requested permission to revive the Spring Festival which had been suspended for some time now. Tēcikar entitled him to do so. Hence, the arrangements for that *utsava* were in full swing. Tampirāṉ said to me in Tēcikar's presence, "Most people are not well aware of the greatness of this holy place of Tiruviṭaimarutūr. Although we have several old *purāṇams*, only very few are capable to read and understand them. If you would therefore write out a brief prose version of the sacred history of the place, we could have it printed and distribute it to everyone. I shall take upon myself the cost of the printing and other expenses." Tēcikar remarked that it would indeed be a good idea. I agreed to write it out.

There is a Tamil *purāṇam* on Tiruviṭaimarutūr composed by Ñāṉakkūttar, and another written by Koṭṭaiyūr Śrī Civakkoḻuntu Tēcikar. I read the second one, took notes and wrote a *sthalamahātmya* about the sanctity of Tiruviṭaimarutūr. I entitled it *Śrī Mattiyārccuna Māṉmiyam*, and described in it the sanctity of the presiding deity, of the shrine, and of its waters, including the histories of various worshippers and devotees. I read it out both to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and Cuppiramaṇiyat Tampirāṉ. Then, at the wish of the Tampirāṉ, I appended to this two sets of verses in praise of Ēka Nāyakar, the processional icon, one used as a lullaby, another as a swing song.

When it was all finished, the Tampirāṉ considered where it would be best to print it. He knew that previously a *Kumpakōṇa Purāṇam* and a *Pūvāḷūrp-purāṇam* had been printed in Madras. But when I suggested sending it there for publication, he said, "The book is now completed. This Spring Festival is due shortly. It would be very useful if it comes off the press before that. If proofs are to come by mail, and you are to correct them here, I don't think the book would be ready in time. Since you are now on holidays why not you yourself go to Madras, stay there and finish the whole matter without any delay or worry? It would be greatly simplified. Even though the expense may be a little more, the matter is very important." His words made me feel like one who gets paid for eating the sugar-cane. I had not visited Madras before, but longed very much to do so, if only to be able to meet and get acquainted with the scholars who were living there. Moreover, I had a great desire to stay for some time with Cēlam Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār and read out *Cintāmaṇi* to him. I considered it a great luck that this matter arose, for it would enable me to realize all this, and so I readily agreed to go and see the book through print.

## Journey to Madras

I set out for Madras on an auspicious day, taking with me two of my private pupils, Citamparam Cāminātaiyar and Citamparam Cōmacuntara Mutaliyār. Cuppiramaṇiya Tampirāṉ sent along with me a man to help me. I stayed in Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār's bungalow.

The book which I brought with me I handed over to the Jīvarakṣāmirta Press in Madras, left my two friends there to look after the work, and spent most of my time with Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār. He was most pleased to get from me a full report on *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. "See to it that you somehow finish the work and publish the book. You may do the editing from here. I shall give you my full support", he said. I replied, "It is you who started me on this job; it should be you who should see to it that it is finished."

## Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār's help

I stayed for over two weeks in Madras. Although I had come to the city with the ostensible purpose of seeing *Mattiyārccuṉa Māṉmiyam* through the press, my other object was to get acquainted with the city well, and to get to know the scholars living there. Thanks to the ready assistance of Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār, that other objective was accomplished quite easily.

Mutaliyār took me every afternoon in his coach to places like the Presidency College and the Cosmopolitan Club, and introduced me to everyone of note who was a member or a visitor there. While he described to me their particular merits, he also told them about my activities. It was through him that I met Judge

Muttucāmi Aiyar, Sir V. Pāsyam Aiyaṅkār, Śrīnivāca Rākavaiyaṅkār, Pammal Vijayaraṅka Mutaliyār, Rakunātarāyar and a number of other gentlemen of consequence. At the Presidency College I saw Pūṇṭi Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār and Toḻuvūr Vēlāyuta Mutaliyār. Both of them became very close friends. I talked to the Vernacular Superintendent Cēṣakiri Cāstiri, and to the Tamil Pandit, Kiruṣṇamācāriyar. I met yet another large group of scholars and was able to talk to them — Puracapākkam Aṣṭāvatāṉam Capāpati Mutaliyār, Cōṭacāvatāṉam Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār, Katirvēṟ Karviryar, Kāñcīpuram Irāmacuvāmi Nāyutu, Kōmaṭicuvaraṉ Pēṭṭai Irācakōpāla Piḷḷai, Cūḷai Appaṉ Ceṭṭiyār, Cūḷai Cōmacuntara Nāyakar, Tirumayilai Caṇmukam Piḷḷai and others. Since Aṣṭāvatāṉam Capāpati Mutaliyār had been a fellow-student of Śrī Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai, he talked gladly of his great learning. Cōṭacāvatāṉam Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār discussed with me his student days under splendid SrīPiḷḷai and his unique qualities of that prince of scholars. The scholars whom I thus met recited for me a number of ancient stanzas, and I took them all down. I too told them the occasional poems that I knew.

I also saw the usual sights one is supposed to see in Madras — the museum, the sea-front, the temples, the library, the University. It was to my great advantage that I could meet all those artists and savants of the city. I was struck with the modesty and kindness of people who occupied the highest posts in the land. The behaviour of those great men was in striking contrast to the arrogant and bullying manners of the petty officials I had known in Kumpakōṇam, who received no more than some fifteen or twenty rupees as their monthly salaries.

### The Mutt's fame

One day I entered the Kācippāṭṭi Restaurant in the Taṅkacālai street. As soon as I appeared, several people came to meet me: "Come in, come in! Where have you been so long?" They welcomed me very cordially. I was at first taken aback. There must be something wrong. They were dressed in a way which gave them away as musicians: shawls with golden thread, big scented marks on the forehead — and their speech! As I was watching them with certain suspicion, one of them asked: "When have you arrived from Tiruvāvaṭuturai? How is His Holiness?" I found out from his questions that they must know who I was.

"I really don't know who you might be", I said.

"But we know very well who you are! You are always at the side of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar! Aha! What a marvellous place! What a company! What splendid music there!"

I felt that it was Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar's purity of heart, his liberality, his great learning and his fame that were the reasons that the fame of a far away Mutt has spread even to this place in Madras. These musicians praised to high heavens the splendour of Tiruvāvaṭuturai's *guru pūcai*, the skill of Tēcikar's artists and scholars, the beauty of the Mutt's arrangements. They described in detail all those outstanding qualities which were characteristic of the Mutt, and the audience listened spellbound. "Is that so? Does such a place really exist? When we listen to you it appears that that Mutt must be an enormous temple of beauty, arts and wisdom!"

I was standing in the midst of the crowd, immersed in a boundless ocean of happiness. And I joined them to describe the unsurpassed greatness of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar.

## Kuṭṭittampirāṉ

One day I got a message from Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. He wrote in it: "We understand that a certain Kuṭṭittampirāṉ is studying under Vittuvāṉ Āṟumukat Tampirāṉ at the Mutt in Nāṭṭup Piḷḷaiyār Kōyil Street in Madras City. When we had been to Kumpakōṇam for the Makāmakam, this Kuṭṭittampirāṉ was presented to us by Appā Piḷḷai, official of the Kuṉṟakkuṭi Mutt, and by Teyvacikāmaṇi Aiyar. His personality and appearance attracted our eye. The answers he gave to the questions we asked in Sanskrit and Tamil were quite satisfactory. In case he is available we should like to have him here as Junior Head. If he agrees, please send him to this place.

Since the very first day of my arrival in Madras, that young monk used to come often and exchange greetings and polite remarks with me. Luckily he happened to live close to the printing press, and hence saw me there. When I told him about Śrī Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar's sincere proposal, he agreed happily. I reported about it to Tēcikar in writing. He wrote by return, asking me to send the monk at once to Tiruvāvaṭuturai. I did so and saw him off in the company of one of the persons who had come with me, Citamparam Cāminātaiyar, in charge.

*Mattiyārccuṉa Māṉmiyam* was under print. At that time, 'unexpectedly, Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār appeared in Madras with his men, in order to get treatment for his failing eyesight, and stayed for a few days with me in Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār's bungalow. Subsequently he rented a place with the help of the husband of his wife's sister, Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār, and went to live there. We had quite a few discussions, went to see a few places together, and watched the printing.

## Back from Madras

As soon as the copies of the book were ready, I went to Tiruviṭaimarutūr on the day of the Wedding Festival, handed over to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar the copies I had brought along, and recounted to him all I had seen and done. He listened carefully and showed his appreciation.

"The trip of Cāminātaiyar to the City resulted in three-folded advantage", he said with satisfaction. "One gain was his, and the Mutt gained twice. It was good for him to make the acquaintance of so many interesting and important people. The Mutt has gained a fine publication in the shape of *Mattiyārccuṉa māṉmiyam*, and a fine *kuṭṭittampirāṉ* whom he had sent here from Madras."

The Spring Festival went off splendidly. The book was distributed at a proper moment and given to everyone.

# Chapter 94

# Perturbations and perplexities

As I studied the *Cintāmaṇi* incessantly, my mind became obsessed with the book. I was immersed in it fully. *Cintāmaṇi* was the first thing I looked into in the morning as soon as I got up. And I sat at it to study it the moment I had cleaned my teeth said my prayers, and had my breakfast. I did not mind if it was time to start for the College. The stroke of the first College bell falling on my ears would pull my mind from *Cintāmaṇi* with a violent wrench. I would rush through my meal like mad and dash off. On some days I even skipped my meals and hurried off. In the course of my classes I used to speak innumerable times about *Cintāmaṇi* to my students. I invited many of the boys to my house to assist me in the search for reading variants and the writing of notes, thus making them participate in the *Cintāmaṇi* research. As soon as I returned home from College in the afternoons I used to take up the book again. With a copy of *Cintāmaṇi* on a small writing desk on the veranda of our house I would be absorbed in the text night after night. I was a companion for *Cintāmaṇi*, and it was a companion for me, and the research went on, regardless of the passage of time.

One night one of the College teachers was returning home after having played cards with a friend till midnight, and he passed through our street. Seeing me seated alone in the porch surrounded by darkness everywhere he exclaimed in surprise, "What is this? You're still sitting there? I saw you like this on my way out; and I see you sitting here as I go back!" I said a few words and sent him fast away.

## *Cintāmaṇi* the universe

It was in those hours of solitude that Tiruttakkatēvar would lead me wherever his fancy led him. He would show me the sights of Irācamāpuram. He would take me into the harem of Caccantaṉ's palace. He would narrate the deeds of Kaṭṭiyaṅkāraṉ.

There speaks Cīvakaṉ; there he plays; or performs acts of valour; or spends his time in amorous revels; Kāntaruvatattai appears in all her splendour; Kuṇamālai, too, makes her appearance.

In the midst of such scenes it was only my body that stayed in solitude, surrounded by darkness, while my mind ranged far and wide in time and space, delighted by the events in the universe called *Cintāmaṇi*. Now and then the critical mind would assert itself. Perplexities and difficulties would arise. Then the vivid scenes of the narrative would fade out. The text itself and the words in it would come to the fore. Variant readings would appear and fight with each other. I would stand bewildered, in confusion, unable to see the matter clearly. Suddenly, in a flash, a fresh light would burst out. The problem would be solved. And again the text and its words, and even this world, would disappear from my view.

## The acquaintance of Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai

Meanwhile, Ci. Vai. Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai came from Madras and settled down in Kumpakōṇam, setting up practice there as a lawyer, just as he had written to me. He was receiving a pension from a high office which he had held before. He used to come to my house often and we would then discuss Tamil writings like old friends. He rented a house in Karuppūr, near Kumpakōṇam. I too used to visit his house often. He told me that he planned to publish a number of Tamil texts, and expressed a desire to go to Tiruvāvaṭuturai and make the acquaintance of Śrī Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. So I took him there and introduced him to Tēcikar. He knew of many palmleaf manuscripts stocked in the Mutt, and hoped they would help him in his editorial work. As a result of the talk Tēcikar had with him he was impressed with his noble character and his learning and erudition.

Following Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai's wish I introduced him to the leading citizens and the lawyers at Kumpakōṇam. The two of us discussed matters pertaining to Tamil constantly. He asked me about many things; and I would tell him. Due to him I got informed about many things pertinent to the research performed by the scholars of Jaffna. One of the scholars who helped him in his work was Ciṟ. Kailāca Piḷḷai of Jaffna-Nallūr. He seemed to be a well-informed and accomplished scholar; apparently knew about me expressed a great appreciation of me.

One day I told Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai in one of our conversations how fond Śrī Mīnāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai was of *Kamparāmāyaṇam*, and how I had studied many of its stanzas with him. Moreover, I made it clear to him that I studied the text critically, having obtained from my Master many correct readings; and that I made a lot of notes collecting the correct readings after collating the manuscript copies of the entire *Rāmāyaṇam* text available in the Mutt's library. He then borrowed from me a copy of *Kamparāmāyaṇam*, canto by canto, transferred all my critical notes and corrections, emendations and remarks into his copy, and returned my copy to me.

## One afternoon

One afternoon Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai appeared in my house. After a long speech about this and that he said, "Catāciva Piḷḷai who was reprinting the works of Nāvalar at Madras told me that you have a copy of *Cintāmaṇi* with the detailed commentary, apparently an excellent copy, and that you are doing some research in it. I have been planning to edit and publish the *Cintāmaṇi* myself. A wealthy landlord from Colombo, Mr. Kaṉam Rāmanātaṉ, has promised me to bear the entire cost of such edition. If you'd be willing to give me your copy I could use it for collation with my texts."

"I have been doing a rather thorough research in that text for quite a few years," I answered. "And I do intend to have it published myself. I am in no mind to part with my text." And I refused.

*Tāmōtaram:* "I have a lot of experience in such matters. Much money is needed for a first edition of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. It should be printed in Madras. It won't be easy for you to be here and to have the thing published in the City. If I begin I could finish the book within two or three months. I'll let you have three hundred copies of the text on next Pongal."

*My answer:* "I have published a few books in Madras, too, for instance the *Kumpakōṇapurāṇam*. And I have a promise from a wealthy man: Cēlam Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār will take care of the necessary expense."

*Tāmōtaram*: "What can *he* do? He can offer you only a pitiable amount. Will he read the proofs? Will he supervise the printing? This book is something entirely different than the *Kumpakōṇapurāṇam* which you had published before. This requires an entirely different method of editing and publishing. One must go to Madras and see to it personally; you must finish the whole job there in person. The manager of the Scottish Printing Press,there is a close friend of mine. He will do everything that I tell him. But you have your teaching. The College work won't allow you to do it properly."

I said: "The College work is no obstacle at all. I do the work in my free time, and I have plenty of it. If necessary, I will take a leave. Should I throw away everything which I have done so far, all my research into the text, word by word and letter by letter, and leave it all to you?"

*Tāmōtaram:* "Why throw away? Of course not! All your results would find place in my edition! I would also properly acknowledge your participation. If you publish the work yourself, you can hardly praise your own work. If I publish it, I can write out a proper appreciation of your participation, and make you famous!"

## I don't want fame

*My answer:* "I don't want fame, and I don't wait for others to praise me. I made a vow to publish this work. I don't wish to forget it. And I simply don't want all my efforts in that direction to be in vain!"

*Tāmōtaram*: "The efforts which you have so far shown and the toils which you have so far suffered are not so terrible! Real efforts and real troubles await you yet! And what I'm telling you is that *you* don't have to undergo them! I have long ago decided to be the one engaged in this labourious work, and I have also actually published a few works already! That's why my name is well-known throughout Tamilnadu. If *Cintāmaṇi* comes out as my publication, it will receive due respect and due popularity. And your name will be connected with it."

I said, "Weren't you, too, originally just like me? Didn't you have to begin, too? It will be seen, ultimately, what the public has to say about my edition, whether it will bring me fame or blame!"

## Why don't you publish the Irāmāyaṇam?

*Tāmōtaram:* "If you're so keen to edit and publish some classical work why not the *Kamparāmāyaṇam?* You have been studying it for many years. I have seen rare and precious emendations in your copy of the text. The *Rāmāyaṇam* is more prestigious than any other literary work. Moreover, by publishing it you earn merit in heaven!"

*I said:* "Wouldn't that be a costly undertaking, too?"

*Tāmōtaram:* "So what! A lot of rich people would come forward to offer all they have for having the *Rāmāyaṇam* published in print! Publish it canto by canto, like that. I shall take care to find a patron responsible for the cost of every canto of the epic. And leave the edition of the *Cintāmaṇi* to me."

### The state of my mind

At that moment I did not know what to say. I was utterly confused. There were moments when I was convinced that nothing could be better than to engage myself in the work of editing the *Cintāmaṇi* and in the research in Tamil Jaina literature. There were moments when I began to suspect my abilities and potentialities to finish that big job. Although I did ask myself whether indeed I was up to the task, I was firmly resolved to begin with the editing, and subsequent publication, and I did not much hesitate. 'Cēlam Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār had promised to offer all necessary assistance to bring this work to the end. We began the work agreeing that the net result would be the publication of the text in print. But now this man demands that I leave this work to him! Can I go back? Every dot, every comma, every mark in my handwritten notes are of immense value! To other eyes they may look like small strokes. But I know better. How will this man read my notes? How many ideas, views, opinions are hidden in every single remark of mine? How can someone else guess it? How can a person who has not written these annotations find out what I meant? How many Jaina books have I studied to discover this or that fact! How many Jaina friends did I have to contact, to ask, to beseech, to induce and convince before they gave me the needed information! And all this for what? Should all this go just like that?' My mind was in a whirlpool, and for a while I kept silent, deliberating, torturing myself with contradictory thoughts.

He, however, kept talking; he went on and on, citing many various reasons for demanding my copy of the *Cintāmaṇi*. Finally I said, "My father has gone out. When he returns I'll ask him, and then I will come tomorrow morning and tell you how I decided with regard to the matter of the edition." "Very well," said he. "But give me the book now, I'll just look at it — once. Then we shall do according to your decision. I expect your decision to be favourable to me."

### I gave him the copy

I went inside, took the manuscript copy of the *Cintāmaṇi* in two parts which I have researched and provided with my copious notes, and placed it into his hands. At once his face lit up. There was a great satisfaction, and a genuine joy in his smile. "Well, I shall take leave now", he said. "Talk to your father, tell him what I said, ask his opinion; and I shall come tomorrow morning for your approval." He took leave of me, and with my copy of the text in hands got into his carriage and drove off.

### A new decision

The fact that Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai, who had so far been talking rather cautiously and convincingly, departed now so suddenly with my copy in his hands — this event gave birth to a new emotion. I don't know whether that feeling would have arisen or not if he would have kept talking somewhat more. In any case, after he had left I found myself utterly confused, perplexed, and worried. Nothing made sense! I was terribly afraid that I won't see the copy which he took with him ever again. With a mind very much disturbed, and with an indescribable worry, I saw my father coming home. As soon as he saw me he exclaimed: "What is the matter? Has something happened? You are not yourself!" First I said, "Oh, it's nothing." But then I told him everything: how Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai came to see me, what he said, how we discussed the *Cintāmaṇi*, and how I gave him my copy. He said, "You should not have been so imprudent as to have given him your copy just like that. But don't be worried. You have already informed a great number of people that you — and no one else — were going to edit and publish the *Cintāmaṇi* You're working on it day and night. It is you who must publish it. Put your trust in Śrī Mīṉāṭci Cuntarēcuvar and stop worrying. Go to him tomorrow morning, tell him what I said, take your manuscript back, and proceed further carefully." This has encouraged me. I came to a firm decision: I alone was going to publish the *Cintāmaṇi*. It was the only just thing to do.

I had my meals. But I could not sleep. I kept thinking how I shall argue the matter with Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai, and how I should obtain my book back. I could not think of anything. I could hardly wait for morning. As soon as it was day I finished my morning worship and went to the house of Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai, accompained by my younger brother, Ciranīcvi Cuntarēcaṉ. I reached his home, sat down on the outer veranda, and waited for him to appear. Hearing me coming he came out. He placed my copy of my text back in my hands, and began to ask about a few matters which were rather controversial. There was another man present, Ampikaipāka Upāttiyāyar of Jaffna. I saw that Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai had marked with lines upto page 20 of the first part of the text. He said, the phrase *mīṉēṟuyartta* in the stanza is explained in its commentary as *ēṟrai mēmpaṭuttiṉa* 'which elevated the male-fish'. What is this? In the edition published by Mr. Bower it reads *mēmpaṭuttiṉa* with elevating. Please explain this." I did. He kept on asking: "The commentary says 'The victorious elephant bull which had conquered others before', interpreting thus the line *veṉṟik kaḷiṟai viritāravaṉ veṉṟa vāṟum*. What does it mean exactly?" That, too, I explained quite clearly.

Then he went on asking similar questions. I explained and answered them all. Ampikaipāka Upāttiyāyar listened carefully to everything that was said. I said then to Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai, "The problems you have raised just now are really very simple. There are in this text many more difficult portions. You would not have the opportunity to get them clarified. Hence I would suggest that you give up this effort. I'll take up the matter of editing. How can you be editor if you don't understand the text?" He answered, "It is my intention simply not to let the book die! If I publish the book with a generous subsidy, it is up to the readers to try to make out the meaning." "How can the readers make out the meaning if they'll have in their hands an edition prepared by someone who has not understood it himself? I assure you I have by now understood it completely. That's why I am going to publish it, If you insist, go ahead, and prepare an edition. But I shall not give up."

I then took the two parts of my copy of the text which he had returned to me and gave them to my brother with the words, "Take this home, and be careful about it! And tell father what you've seen and hear. I'll follow you." After I had sent my brother off, I spoke to Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai for some time yet, and then Ampikaipāka Upāttiyāyar, who had followed our conversation with interest, turned to him and said, "Sir, if I can judge from what you've been discussing, this gentleman here has studied the book many times whereas you've not seen it properly even once. Therefore, do please let him do the editing! You certainly should not take over!" He spoke quite emphatically. Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai did not say anything. He sat there silently. I took leave of them both and went home. Father, who had been worried, was now at peace, seeing my copy of the *Cintāmaṇi*. And I kept thinking of the verse about the "victorious elephant bull", and of Ampikaipāka Upāttiyāyar and what he had said.

# Chapter 95

## Cintāmaṇi: printing begins

I was eager now to start with the printing of the *Cintāmaṇi* as soon as possible. If I would have wanted first to make sure of every single point it would take many years before it would get published. It would certainly not be easy to proceed only after I would have been satisfied in removing every small doubt about every controversial bit. Some of my friends said, "You may spend a whole lifetime on this kind of research. Before you decide to start printing someone else will publish it. Better organize the data you have so far collected — and begin! You may always add the necessary corrections in the next edition. With subsequent editions the work will improve, too." Encouraged by such words I decided definitely to start printing.

### Taking subscriptions

Money was need to publish; where to get it? This was another headache. Several friends made a suggestion. "Why not approach well-to-do citizens interested in Tamil, tell them of the proposal to publish the *Cintāmaṇi*, get them to subscribe to it and put down an amount in advance, and so start the work?" This seemed to me to be an excellent idea. I had a prospect printed in that sense and sent it out to my friends.

When I went to Tiruvāvaṭuturai and spoke about this matter to His Holiness, he said his should be the first signature, and he signed for several copies, paying for them gladly on the spot. At Kumpakōṇam, I obtained subscription from some seventy friends. I went to Tanjāvūr and Tiruccirāppaḷḷi and obtained help from many friends there. Some twenty-five people subscribed at Tiruccirāppaḷḷi on the recommendation of Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār.

### Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār's opinion

While I was in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi, Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār has arrived there in connection with a law-suit at Uṭaiyārpāḷaiyam. When I found out about his coming I went to see him. I informed him that I came to collect the subscription.

He had always urged me to go on with the work of editing and publishing the work. Now he said, "Having this work published would cost a lot of effort. It would take plenty of time, immense perservance and, above all, it needs a lot of money. I was told that Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai has been taking the trouble to publish the *Cintāmaṇi*. He's got it all — the leisure, the proper means, the wealth. Leave it to him! Let him do the work! You can stay carefree"

I was truly shocked to hear him saying this. My amazement knew no limit: Is this the same Cēlam Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār who was the first to encourage, nay, incite me to take up on myself the work of publishing this *Cintāmaṇi?* I would have never in my wildest dreams imagined that this man would speak like this! He knew well, didn't he, my abilities, my devotion, my efforts to have this work finished! I was feeling sad and disappointed that he now wants me to change my mind, although he must know all the facts well. However, I did not give in, and I didn't even begin to take seriously what he had said.

"I've been working day and night for quite a few years. And when I say working I do mean working! I am now not going to give it up. If Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai wants to publish it, let him do it. I won't stand in his way. How could I? I am not entitled to do anything like that. Who am I to stop him? But I myself shall somehow get on with this business, too," I said, and very boldly, too.

But he really loved me; he realized my serious effort to publish *Cintāmaṇi*.

"I'm not trying to stop you or to really change your mind. I just said it because I know what a strong person he is. Don't I know your perfect capability to do it? Since you have enough courage and determination to go through with it. I believe that you will succeed in it. I am always prepared to give you all the assistance you need." I was happy to see my old Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār speaking.

I had the *Cintāmaṇi* constantly in mind. I prayed to all gods and goddesses to help me finish that job of publication well. I made up my mind to go to Madras during the summer vacation of 1886 and begin there the work of printing. Accordingly I set about getting my manuscript copy ready against that date.

### Trip to Madras

I set out for Madras, with a prayerful thought of the Lord. As Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār happened to be out of town, I did not go to his bungalow, but went and stayed in the house of Cōṭacāvatāṉam Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār. I left there the manuscript copies I brought along, the tools needed for my research, and other things, and boarded at a hotel in Puracapākkam. The complete as well as incomplete manuscript copies of *Cintāmaṇi* in my box were twentyfour in all. As Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār has been engaged in the work of publication for a long time, I decided to be guided by him in the choice of a printing press.

### Rājakōpālāccāriyar

On the morning following the day of my arrival in Madras I found a Śrī Vaiṣṇava waiting for me at Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār's house. He saw me, but appeared to ignore me. I asked Ceṭṭiyār, "Who is this gentleman?" "He is the superintendent of the English section in S. P. C. K. Press", answered Ceṭṭiyār. "A person well-versed in Tamil, too. He speaks fluently many languages. He knows perfectly well the printing business from head to tail. He has come specially to meet you."

I was really delighted to hear this. In the hope that he would assist me in my undertaking, I asked him, "Sir, I am very happy to meet you. I need your friendship, your blessing and your help. I don't have much experience in the matter of printing, and so request you to guide me in this work." I learned that he belonged to Tēraḻuntūr, and that his name was Cakkaravartti Rājakōpālāccāriyar.

"I heard that you brought with you copies of *Cintāmaṇi*. I have come now only to see you and those books", he said.

I opened my box at once and displayed the manuscripts before him. He examined them and said, "I can see that you've gone to a lot of trouble to gather all these, and to study all these in detail." And he added, "Have you compared all these copies? Have you noted down the variant readings?"

"In a way I have done all that", I said in all modesty. "Some copies I have checked thoroughly and in full. And the others I have referred to wherever the readings were doubtful, and noted the correct readings. I have no idea what else has to be done beside that. I have done my best to gather and organize this material. It is up to you to have it properly printed and published in an attractive shape." We then discussed all possible ways how the book could be published.

"The poem, the paraphrase, and the detailed notes are all massed together! What should I do about it?" I asked. In those days I thought that it was almost impossible to distinguish among these three, or make the reader distinguish among them. The answer he gave filled me with great astonishment.

"It is possible to make them distinct quite easily. It is necessary to print the original in bold type, and the commentaries in smaller type. We mark off the paraphrase and the detailed commentary by putting them in separate paragraphs. In print it is possible to deal effectively with all the confusion one finds in manuscripts. You don't have to worry about that at all," he said.

I felt tremendous relief and indescribable joy: 'What a man that he can say this! This is a real godsend to me!'

"In what press can it be printed" I asked. To that he too had an answer: "There is a printing establishment called Tirāviṭa Ratṉākaram in Cūḷai Avatāṉam Pāppaiyar Street. The owner, Śrī T. Kōvinta Ācāriyār, is my friend. A completely reliable man. Mr. Ceṭṭiyār knows him, too."

"What you say seems to me like a good omen. It is most proper that *Cintāmaṇi* should issue out of a press the name of which means Ocean of Tamil. Did not the gem, *Cintāmaṇi*, rise out of the sea? It's good that Tamil *Cintāmaṇi* will appear from the ocean of Tamil," I said with pleasure, and agreed completely.

## Good omen

The father of Cēlam Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār, Kōpālacāmi Mutaliyār, had then arrived from Cēlam to Madras. When he found out that I was staying in Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār's house he suggested that I could lodge in his bungalow, and so, to comply with his wish, I moved over to an outer room of his big house and stayed there.

On an auspicious day at three o'clock in the afternoon — an hour presented as auspicious — Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār and myself set out from Cēlam Irāmacāmi Mutaliyārs bungalow with the first batch of manuscript in our hands to be given to the printers. Kōpālacāmi Mutaliyār was standing at the portico of the bungalow to see us off. At that moment it began to drizzle lightly. Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār stopped and hesitated somewhat, saying, "It begins to rain." I said, "It's only a slight drizzle. That's good. There's nothing wrong in that. Come on, lets go." We set out.

As we went we saw a man coming towards us from outside the gate with a large silver tray in hands, with a cloth covering its contents. As we drew near and approached him, he removed that cloth. Oranges and other fruit were heaped on the tray. As soon as my eyes fell on it, I trembled all over with a wave of pleasure. At the same moment Kōpālacuvāmi Mutaliyār who had been watching us from behind, exclaimed, "A good omen indeed! Fruits! They indicate that your efforts will bear fruition. Go without any worry!" He then shouted at the man: "Hey, you! Give two of these oranges to them!" As the fruit was placed in my hands I was beside myself. 'God's holy grace', I thought; and we went on.

### The printing begins

I went to the press, offered worship to Vikkiṉēcuvara, the god of good beginnings, and handed over the manuscript I brought with me to the proprietor. He gave it at once to the composer. We made a contract to print five hundred copies of royal octavo at Rs. 3½ per forme as charges.

The printing work began. Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār and Rājakōpālāccāriyar gave me all the help I needed in my inexperience. Rājakōpālāccāriyar arranged for the use of different types for the title of the book, chapter headings, other captions, the original text and commentary. There were many quotations in the commentary on the very first stanza. I was confused how to refer to them in the footnotes. He filled in the various reference marks for me, like the asterisk, in due order, and taught me their names. As the press was short of several such types I arranged for their castings, and used them in my work.

I informed Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and my father about everything that had happened since I came to Madras until the moment when arrangements were made for the printing. The printing went on fast.

## Chapter 96

## Events during the printing of Cintamaṇi

When *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* was under print, I used to meet, in free moments, the scholars in Madras. One day I went to see Aṣṭāvatāṉam Capāpati Mutaliyār who lived in Puracapākkam. Since we had met before, he made enquiries about the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt and about the College at Kumpakōṇam. "I have come to Madras to get the *Cintāmaṇi* and its commentary printed" I explained. He was quite shocked hearing this. "What, sir? Who are you to talk of the commentary on *Cintāmaṇi* getting it printed? Is it such an easy matter? Why, you're just a boy! And *Cintāmaṇi* and its commentary - these are immense works! To get it done would be incredibly difficult! You better withdraw from your attempt at once. You don't step into the water without knowing its depth." He was quite severe about it. I was surprised at the way he talked.

## Previous efforts

"Why shouldn't I publish it? I have studied the poem and the commentary any number of times," I replied with audacity. "I have also consulted all the necessary tools. I have every confidence I can see the work finished." If anyone had talked to me like this while I was engaged in my *Cintāmaṇi* researches at Kumpakōṇam, I might have been a little scared. But by the time I came to speak about my work to Aṣṭāvatāṇam Capāpati Mutaliyār I was too deeply immersed in the *Cintāmaṇi* already. My resolve was absolutely firm, and no one could make me change my mind.

"How is it that instead of wishing me well in this good enterprise which I have begun, you try to discourage me like this?"

"What if you have begun! Many have begun before you to see this work through print — and thereby it has stopped! My own teacher, Kāñcīpuram Capāpati Mutaliyār, and I began to study the work with a view to have it published; we found it too difficult, and gave up. Many years ago, the Reverend W. H. Drew prepared a scheme for the printing of *Cintāmaṇi*, and published a prospectus to explain his plan. He could not finish the job. The Reverend Pope tried next. He hasn't succeeded either. Even Nalūr Āṟumuka Nāvalar of Jaffna himself seriously thought of it. He had included this work in the list of projected publications appended to the first edition of *Tiruccirrampala Kōvaiyār*. But for some reason he did not take it up. Why, even your own Master, Makāvittuvāṉ Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai apparently wanted to edit this poem, working in collaboration with Cōtacāvatāṉam Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār. They seem to have found it a big headache, and gave it up. Thus, whoever had touched it, couldn't finish it — and now you dare to attempt to publish it, and I am worried about you," said the oldman.

However, his words did not discourage me in the least. "Should we desist from our own attempts because they have not succeeded? Is that rather not proof of their desire to somehow see this book in print? And is it not the duty of others to fulfil their wish? Even if my effort fails, I shall lose nothing. If by the grace of God I succeed, won't it make every lover of Tamil rejoice? I shall proceed with my work of research and publishing, doing my best according to my limited knowledge. Naturally there will be shortcomings. One day they will be rectified by better qualified men." I said all this in high spirits.

He finished our conversation on a dissatisfied note. "I have had my say. It's up to you now." So I took my leave of him.

### Superciliousness — Ēkkaḻuttam

In the 58th stanza of *Nāmakaḷ Ilampakam*, while commenting on the line "*ēttaru mayiṟkuḻa mirunta pōṉṟavē* Naccinārkkiṉiyar has written" to be interpreted as 'similar to a large flock of proudly upward-looking peacocks' ", and adds, as illustration, the word *ēkkaḻuttam* as others have said. While that poem and that commentary were under print, I could not remember where I had come across the phrase *ēkkaḻuttam*. So I just put it down in my diary. Suddenly one day it came to me: I remembered a verse in *Ciṟupañcamūlam*. Its beginning runs as follows:

*kallātāṉ ṟāṉkāṇu nuṭpamuṅ kātiraṇṭum*
*illātātā ṉekkaḻuttañ ceytalum*

The vision of one who is unlearned,
and the stretching of the neck of one
who is deaf on both ears..."

The meaning of the word *ekkaḻuttam* which occurs in this verse was not clear to me. I remembered all the illustrations given in the commentary on *Cintāmaṇi*. As I thought of this particular line of *Ciṟupañcamūlam*, the above-quoted example, *ēkkaḻuttam*, came to my mind. I thought: 'Could we perhaps interpret the literal meaning of the line of *Ciṟupañcamūlam* as " the looking upwards and stretching the neck of one who is devoid of both ears"? 'I got hold at once of the text and looked it up. The verse was indeed there. While the author of *Ciṟupañcamūlam* was listing instances where the learned ones would laugh, says first, the depth of research by the illiterates. Then he adds *ēkkaḻuttam* of those whose ears are deaf. According to Naccinārkkiṉiyar, the ē — in the compound *ēkkaḻ uttam* means *'looking upwards'*. If indeed the word ēkkaḻuttam means 'looking upward by stretching the neck', the sense of the verse in *Ciṟupancamūlam* becomes clear.

I could also envisage the following scene. A group of men and women gathered to listen to a musical performance. One among that crowd is deaf. As the music plays, he stretches his neck and moves his head rhythmically. Those who knew him deaf, won't they laugh at his pretension of enjoying the music? This was one possibility how to imagine what was the original meaning of the line "the stretching of the neck by one who is deaf on both ears". But in the edition of *Ciṟupañcamūlam*, the word was printed differently — as *ēkkaḻuttam*. (Was this a mistake?)

In *Ṉitineṟiviḷakkam* there is a verse

"*ēkkaḻutta mikkuṭaiya mākol, pakai mukatta veḷvēlāṉ pārvaiyil*
*tīṭṭum, nakaimukatta naṉku matippu*" (39)

in which Kumarakuruparar describes the proud look in the eyes of a victorious, heroic king. In that poem too, the editor had printed *ēkkaḻuttam*.

While researching the chapter of Kāntaruvatattaiyār, of *Cintāmaṇi*, I discovered the word *ēkkaḻuttam* in its fourth stanza. Naccinārkkiṉiyar in his gloss on this phrase writes quite clearly "*ēkkaḻuttam* = raising the head". What better authority can there be than his? I corrected the readings in my copies of *Ciṟupañcamūlam* and *Nītineṟiviḷakkam* (not *ekkaḻuttam* but *ēkkaḻuttam*, obviously). Then, out of joy, I too felt a bit of 'superciliousness', like stretching my neck and raising my head!

I could not keep the joy of discovery to myself. I found Cakkaravartti Rājakōpālaccāriyar and told him: "I have got hold today of a correct variant in a doubtful reading! I began to realize that Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar is my greatest bene factor.

"What, have you discovered, a new continent?"

"I wouldn't be happier if indeed I would have discovered a new continent!" And I told him the history of *ēkkaḻuttam.* He in his turn told the story of the emendation to his friends, Cūḷai Appaṉ Ceṭṭiyār and others. They praised me highly. All those scholars were sincere in their genuine pleasure at the discovery of a correct reading, at any new fact emerging from the commentary, at any success in my editorial work. This gave me great encouragement and was one of the reasons why I could not be discouraged by the words of Aṣṭāvatāṉam Capāpati Mutaliyār. I was satisfied, thinking, 'Whether I succeed in publishing the *Cintāmaṇi* so that everything will be quite clear or not, this is enough: just to throw light on a few matters among the many which are doubtful or misunderstood. This in itself is surely a great achievement.'

## The copy of Mr. Bower

One day I heard that there was a copy of the commentary on *Cintāmaṇi* with a certain Ciṉṉacāmi Piḷḷai, who was a pupil of Aṣṭāvatāṉam Capāpati Mutaliyār, and was serving as Tamil pandit in the Christian College, and that it was a copy written out after collation of twenty manuscripts, and that it had formerly belonged to Mr. Bower who had published in print *Nāmakaḷ Ilampakam.* All this was told to me by Cūḷai Appaṉ Ceṭṭiyār. I went to see that Tamil pandit, accompanied by Tillai Viṭaṅkaṉ Vēlucāmi Piḷḷai, 'the tiger of *veṇpā*, who was my friend and a relative of Ciṉṉacāmi Piḷḷai. I asked him to lend me that particular copy of *Cintāmaṇi;* I would inspect it and return it to him.

He went in and brought a large paper manuscript. It looked very attractive and was certainly of exceptional size. Ciṉṉacāmi Piḷḷai placed it in my hands saying, "This copy was written under the supervision of Mr. Bower. I knew him well. When he returned home he presented this to me as a keepsake, and left". I took it with great expectations: I hoped it would be perfect, since it resulted from the study of twenty different scripts; I supposed it would prove to be of great help to me. Eagerly I took it home.

I turned the leaves rapidly as soon as I arrived. They were replete with mistakes. All the incorrect readings were there that I had encountered in other faulty copies. I knew from experience that a thousand incorrect copies could not equal one single clean script. The more of such faulty copies one sees, the more confused does one become, with a large number of useless variants in reading. Apart from boasting of how many different copies one had seen, and what a number of variant readings one could show, it is of no use when trying to arrive at a true understanding; on the contrary, it is more dificult. That paper copy was of no use to me at all.

### Work done in solitude

I used to correct the proofs every day, sitting on the premises of the press. Whenever Cōṭācāvatāṉam Cupparāya Ceṭṭyār, Rājakōpālaccāriyar, and Vēlucami Piḷḷai were free, they would assist me by reading the manuscript and in many other ways. In the evenings I used to go with the proofs to Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār's bungalow. In my room there I kept the accessories I needed in my work. There was a broad bench there, outside on the veranda. I used to lie down on it daily. Overhead, in front of that place, was hanging a lantern lamp. I would read the proofs there, in its light, during the long nights. I would compare the manuscript and the galley proofs myself, all on my own, read them very carefully, and correct the latter. I used to go on with this work till I fell asleep on that very bench, overcome by fatigue. Round two o'clock in the night I would suddenly wake up and go on correcting the proofs till it was dawn.

I had no one to keep me company in that solitude. There was a watch-dog chained at a little distance next to a bungalow. Two Gurkhas kept an all-night vigil there. What help could those two give me? They must have wondered: What is it that he does to keep him awake being up every night?

### Pūṇṭi Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār

Cēlam Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār returned meanwhile to Madras from his tour. When he saw the formes of the *Cintāmaṇi* that had been struck off, his delight knew no limits. He took me with him and introduced me to few gentlemen. One day we went to the Cosmopolitan Club. Pūṇṭi Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār was there at the time playing billiards. While playing he talked to me, and listened with pleasure to the Tamil stanzas which I recited. He too quoted a few poems. On another occasion I went to his house, hoping to obtain a subscription from him for the *Cintāmaṇi*. I composed a quatrain suitable for that occasion.

### Kaṭṭaḷaik Kalitturai

*nantāta vāṉpō ruḷaippula vōrkku nayantaḷikkum*
*cintā maṇiyaip palaru meḷituṟac ceytiṭuvāy*
*mantārat tōṭeḻiṟ cantāṉam pōliru vāṉporuḷai*
*vantārk kaḷittiṭu mālraṅka nāta makipatiyē*

The great king Ranganatha
Who gives riches great
To those who come to him,
Like Cantāṉam of
Pleasant fragrance and beauty,
May you help many
To have *Cintāmaṇi*
Which gives willingly
To the scholars
Unceasing great wealth.

and handed over to him the subscription booklet. He subscribed at once, promising to donate one hundred rupees. Then he added, "Let me keep this book for a few days. I shall show it to a few others, and get you some subscriptions." And indeed, he earned me the subscriptions of Pammal Vijayaraṅka Mutaliyār, Raja Sir Cavalai Rāmacāmi Mutaliyār, Cūḷai Ciṅkāra Mutaliyār, and several other interested gentlemen.

### Back to Kumpakōṇam

The summer vacation of 1886 ended. Eighteen formes (144 pages) of *Cintāmaṇi* had been printed. As I had to set off for Kumpakōṇam, I made all the arrangements for the printing to proceed. I asked Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār and Rājakōpālācāriyar, "You can see the galley proofs here; send the pages and further formes to Kumpakōṇam, please." Both of them were of tremendous help to me and were very well paid. When they promised to do as I asked them, I took my leave and departed. Although I felt an irresistible wish to stay and watch the work till the printing of *Cintāmaṇi* would be over, my job at the College was a very concrete prop of my whole existence and so, with my heart and mind remaining in Madras, I mounted the train and arrived at Kumpakōṇam.

## Chapter 97

## Worries of many sorts

As soon as I returned from Madras to Kumpakōṇam, all my friends called on me and made eager enquiries about the publication of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. I had taken some of the printed formes with me. The College teachers looked at them and their comments were favourable. Mr. Bilderbeck, who was then the College Principal, subscribed for three copies. Although he did not know Tamil he felt he ought to help in a good cause as much as he could. I showed him the printed formes. He found the printing rather attractive, and he encouraged me saying, "See through the rest of the printing quickly."

### Tēcikar's words

On Saturday of that week I went to Tiruvāvaṭuturai and saw Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. It is quite impossible to describe his immense joy. He took the formes I had brought, from me, and scrutinized them again and again. I explained to him the principles followed in the printing of the book. Tēcikar then turned to those who were standing nearby and said, "Would Cāminātaiyar have had the opportunity to render such excellent services if he had stayed in the Mutt? Good jewels will shine only in appropriate setting." I interrupted him, with modesty and politeness: "Isn't our Mutt such an appropriate setting? Did not great men like Srī Piḷḷai, and before him Civañāṉa Muṉivar and others, live in this very Mutt and achieve fame here?"

"That is a different matter; your connection with this Mutt has not ceased, has it! You've gained additional honour! You've gone to Madras now, and you began doing your job realy well," said he.

Proofs came frequently to me at Kumpakōṇam from Madras. I sat at their correction at home after College hours. The mail train passed through Kumpakōṇam at midnight. So, I packed the corrected proofs, went to the railway station, and despatched them myself.

## Those who helped

Since the house where I lived in Paktapuri Akkirakāram was so tiny, I tried to find a realtively larger place where I could store the printed copies and read the proofs. There was such a large upstairs in a house situated two houses further. The rent was two and a half rupees per month. I took it, and would store the copies there, and do my proof-reading there, too. Some of the College boys and a few others used to come and help me. One of the students at the College then was Kē. Ar. Srīnivācaiyaṅkār, Srīmāṉ Divan Bahadur Rajasababhushana (who became famous as leading member of the Assembly), now living at Bangalore. He was very kind, coming often and helping most amiably with the proof-reading. There were quite a number of College students who demonstrated their affection for me in this most welcome manner. I also asked Srī Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar to send a few pupils studying at the Mutt to assist me. He sent Vēmpattūr Cuntarēca Pārati and Nalla Kuṟṟālam Piḷḷai. They use to compare the manuscripts and help in some other ways. Srīnivācaiyaṅkār from Koṭṭaiyūr (near Kumpakōṇam), one of my private students, also gave me much assistance in my publishing work.

## Kōppāy Capāpati Piḷḷai

On one occasion I went as usual to Tiruvāvaṭuturai to show the printed formes and proofs to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. On that day a man has come there from the village of Kōppāy by name of Capāpati Piḷḷai. He was an accomplished scholar in Tamil. He was there, observing while I was exhibiting my *Cintāmaṇi* proofs. I knew him from former times. "I'll help you with the reading of the proofs, too," he said, adding, "Please, let me do it." However, I remained prudently silent. When we were later alone, Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar said to me, "You should not give these away to whoever comes and offers to help. It could happen that they would boast of having done what in fact you have done yourself, or worse. It was indeed prudent not to oblige Capāpati Piḷḷai." I was obviously of the same opinion.

## The letter that appeared in The Hindu

While in Madras I made the acquaintance of Srī Ji. Cuppiramaṇiya Aiyar, the editor of *The Hindu,* who also started a Tamil newspaper, *Cutēcamittiraṉ.* When he found out that I was publishing the *Cintāmaṇi* he asked me to write out a short characterization of the book and an announcement about its proposed publication, and had it published in his paper. Moreover, I regularly published in the Tamil daily, the progress of the printing. The announcement appeared, too, in *The Hindu.* I have received a number of letters from various people who had read it and enquired after its progress.

It seemed that the announcement was received with real joy among those who cared for Tamil. Many of those who expressed their appreciation and praise did not even know me. There were a few who, wishing to be somehow connected with this undertaking, sent laudatory and prefatory verses supposed to be published with the text.

In July 1886, a letter was published in *The Hindu* which said among other things: "We have learned that Cāminātaiyar is going to publish the *Cintāmaṇi* with commentary. If indeed it would be Nacciṉarkkiṉiyar's commentary, the Tamils would accept it. If, however, the commentary is to be Cāminātaiyar's, it is useless!" The writer of the letter remained anonymous, hiding behind a pseudonym. I was used to have only appreciations so far about it. So I was a little sad because of that letter. I made a guess, thinking, 'I have announced quite clearly, in both dailies, that the commentary was Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's. I have repeated it in my special announcements too. Someone who has written like this pretending to be ignorant of the facts must simply be a person with evil intentions.' Later I found out that my guess was correct.

My friends insisted that I should reply to that letter. It occurred to me that it would be better if someone else, and not I, wrote a reply, and so I sent a letter to Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār in Madras, informing him of the whole matter. Without the slightest hesitation he wrote a letter, duly signed, saying, "*Cīvakacintāmaṇi* is a very ancient, classical epic. Cāminātaiyar is about to publish it, after a careful scrutiny and critical examination of many different copies, *with the commentary of Nacciṉarkkiṉiyar.* The publication of that text will greatly enrich and please the entire Tamilnadu." This letter was published in *The Hindu* on 5-8-1886.

## Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai

Ci. Vai. Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai, who at that time lived in Kumpakōṇam, was nominated Judge at Putukkōṭṭai, and moved over there. He has succeeded in publishing from there two texts, *Ilakkaṇaviḷakkam* and *Kalittokai*. I was made aware in particular of that fact that he was irritated and disappointed by my taking back the copy of *Cintāmaṇi* which we had discussed. I was told that he had informed a few friends that he was planning to publish *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* all the same. But I just went on with my work, straight ahead: Let anyone do what they want! That's their business; I'm not going to stop my work right in the middle! I got into a state when I didn't care at all about the activities of others; engaged in my job fully and constantly, I simply forgot the obstacles thrown into my path by a few persons.

At the same time, subscriptions multiplied, as a few more friends encouraged me asking to be sent so and so many copies, and promising to pay the corresponding amount of money. Thus the Zamindar of Ūṟṟumalai, Srī·Hirutayālaya Marutappat Tēvar promised to send no less than one hundred rupees.

## Another trip to Madras

After I had returned to Kumpakōṇam when the Summer vacations were finished I conducted the publishing job from there, but the work did not proceed at the expected speed. Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār used to write often. Once he pointed out to me that the only way to get it done quickly was to come and stay in the city. So, I made arrangements to go to Madras once more for Christmas holidays.

## A rumour

I set out for Madras at the end of December. One day someone told me that in newspaper issued from Jaffna there was an announcement that someone was going to publish the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. So I went and asked Catāciva Piḷḷai of Jaffna, who was there to keep an eye on the publication of the work of Nāvalar which appeared in print from Vittiyāṉupālaṉa Press of Āṟumuka Navalar in Taṅkacālai Street (Mint Street). He told me: "It is reported that Nāvalar's son-in-law, Poṉṉampalam Piḷḷai, is also publishing *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. I heard that so far he has printed twenty formes. Look at this: here it is announced, black and white in this paper," and, showing me the newspaper he was referring to, he added, "What is the use of two people publishing the same book!" "So what!" I said, and left at once. From that moment on I resolved to proceed with the publishing work even more thoroughly, even faster, even with greater energy. At that time, I got a new assistant: Cupparāyalu Nāyakar, the Tamil pandit in the Christian College, began to help me regularly with proof-reading.

Srī R. V. Srīṉivācaiyar of Kumpakōṇam College had been appointed to a good job in the office of the Madras Revenue Board. He moved over to the City and I went to his house and stayed with him for a few days. He listened to me patiently and gave me much encouragement in my efforts. I also used to go and see Pūṇṭi Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār. And every day I would talk to Cēlam Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār, and these encounters were always occasions for joy.

## A Villager's attachment to Tamil

One day I was correcting the proofs on the premises of the press. As there was no one there at that hour I was reading the proof aloud by myself. Crowds of people who came to Madras from all over the countryside at the time of Christmas, were passing along the streets. I was sitting near a window facing the street, engaged in my reading the proofs. Someone had quietly approached the window and was standing there listening to me. At first I took no notice of him. I kept on reading, he kept on listening. Then I looked up to see who it was. From the man's rustic appearance I recognized a simple peasant. He had come to watch the Christmas sights and heard my reading. That Tamil had drawn his attention. That's why he was standing there listening. Seeing him there speechless with attention, I asked, "What has brought you here?

"You were reading something! I came to listen."

"Then, why stand there? Come in please." When he stepped in I asked him, "Can you read?" "Yes", he said.

I gave him at once the manuscript and asked him to read. Myself, I went on with the work of correction. He read the text with absorbed attention. I was pleased to note, from the case of this man, how great was the interest in and the affection for Tamil in the villages.

On another day a person who had come to Madras for the sights of Christmas brought me the following message from my friend, the Tanjore lawyer K. S. Srinivāsa Piḷḷai: "A rumour has been circulating that someone is plotting to get hold of the *Cintāmaṇi* formes you have had so far printed, and that to achieve this he was going to bribe with some substantial sums the employees of the printing works. I have been informed about it by the editor of *Nākai Nīlalōcaṇi*, Mr. Catācivam Piḷḷai. You must watch it closely." I was naturally extremely worried. I informed at once the proprietor of the press, Kōvintācāriyar. He was a very fine man. He assured me saying, "Please don't worry about this in the least. It's a miserable lie and a dirty trick. All our workers here are absolutely reliable. Everything that is being printed here is kept strictly confidential."

'How many unnecessary troubles and worries one has with an honest job', I thought sadly, but entrusted this matter to God's compassionate care, and engaged myself in further work.

## The fire in People's Park

One day at half past six in the evening, when I was going through the proofs at the press, Kōvintācāriyār came to me with a very disturbed face and said, "What, Sir! Haven't you heard the news?" "What is it?" I asked in great excitement.

"It is the fire, sir!" he exclaimed, "Everything's gone up in flames!" And he stopped with that. My heart began to beat wildly. As I had *Cintāmaṇi* on my mind constantly and could hardly think of anything else, I was terribly afraid that all the formes of the book that were in stock could have possibly been destroyed. I shouted, "Where? Where?"

"Alas, it is the huge pavilion on the Park fair grounds that has caught fire, apparently! Many, many have died. It wasn't possible to put out the fire. Old and young, women and children, all have died in the flames!" And the man wept. I left the proofs where they were, and rushed off with him at once to see. What a pitiable sight it was! I could not really stand it to look at the horror. I saw many, burnt from head to foot, or with charred limbs, but still alive and in agony. Thousands had come from places outside Madras. Many of them got caught in this holocaust and have perished.

## My parent's worry

When the news spread elsewhere through the newspapers people everywhere were alarmed and frightened and began to worry at what might possibly have happened to their kith and kin. Telegrams were despatched. Letters heaped up. I knew how anxious my parents would be on hearing of that tragedy, and so the very next morning I wrote a card to my father. I didn't give any details. I just wrote"... it was good that you have sent away to our village the cow that had gone dry. I didn't go to the Park Fair. I am quite all right, attending to my printing." My purpose was just to assure them of my safety.

In the meantime, my parents were plunged in terrible worry, not knowing what had happened to me. Cātu Cēṣaiyar comforted them in their worry. The mail-bags that came at night to Kumpakōṇam used to be opened only after daybreak, and the letters delivered to the address at about eight o'clock. Cēṣaiyar could not bear to wait till then. As soon as the mail arrived, he went to the post-office and said to the post-master, "Please open the bags at once!" When he objected, saying that it was against the regular practice, Cēṣaiyar shouted, "What practice, Sir! Are there any rules and regulations in an emergency? All these people are waiting without a wink of sleep, all through the night, anxious to see the mail, and you speak of rules! Unless you open this mail-bag now and hand over the letters to everyone, I shall certainly report you to higher authorities!" The post-master knew that he spoke with a person of much influence, and so he opened the bag. Cēṣaiyar took the postcard addressed to Father and gave it to him at once. Many others too went to get their letters. At the sight of my postcard, life returned to my Father.

# Chapter 98

# New Zeal

One day, after I had come to Madras during the Christmas holidays to work on my edition of *Cintāmaṇi*, I was strolling tired on the edge of the outer verandah of the printing establishment, all by myself, after reading the proofs.

### 'Kiruṣṇa taricaṇam'

Suddenly I heard the cry of a kite. I looked up. There it was, magnificent kite circling over my head. For a while I watched it, then looked down into the street. And lo — I see, approaching me, Tirumāṉūr A. Kiruṣṇaiyar. I stood still, very surprised. "Sir", I exclaimed, glad to see him, "What is this! I see Kṛṣṇa up there in the skies, and I see another Kṛṣṇa down here walking on earth. What happened? The Christmas vacation is almost over, and yet you're here!"

"I have resigned from my job at the Vēlūr Mahantu School. I learned that you had come to the City, and that's why I'm here. I came here to see you and get your advice as to what I may do next."

Hearing his words it occurred to me that I have just obtained an unexpected assistant. "You don't have to worry about getting a job — because your help is wanted here; I'm now engaged in this edition of *Cintāmaṇi*, and the help of a friend is most welcome. So, you can begin at once. You have simply to compare with utmost care and attention the printed pages with this manuscript." I hardly finished and he agreed, very pleased. I was able to entrust to him a few activities connected with the publication of *Cintāmaṇi*, and return without worry to Kumpakōṇam.

### My parents are relieved

Although my letter gave my parents a certain measure of relief, they were fully reassured only on seeing me in person. "So you've come back safe!" mother exclaimed eagerly as she stepped out to meet me, and the tone in which she said it showed the measure of worry she must have felt. "It seems it will take much longer before the book is finished," I said to father. "It does not matter how long it takes. That you came back safe and sound - that's enough!" said father, and his reply showed the concern he felt for me.

## Another edition

One day, Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar sent me a message from Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai saying, "Poṉṉiyā of Jaffna has informed us that he was going to publish *Cintāmaṇi* with Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's commentary, and send it to us once it is printed. Ci. Vaī. Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai has requested us to lend him the Mutt's copy of *Cintāmaṇi;* hence we sent him a copy which was with the Junior Head at Kalliṭaikkuṟicci."

## My resolve

My engagement in the publication of *Cintāmaṇi* has become more and more a matter of personal attachment. I reached the resolve that it must be issued without father delay. So, instead of waiting for long vacations as I used to do to go to Madras I started going there from then on even if I could get only a week off.

In April of 1887 I went to Madras for Summer holidays. Tirumāṉūr Kiruṣṇaiyar was performing his duties with utmost care, reliability and orderliness. I paid him fifteen rupees per month. This enabled him to take his family to Madras and make a careful living with the necessary prudence. I can never forget the help he came to offer me when I needed it most.

## 'Hidden treasures'

Printing was done right up to *Kēmacariyār Ilampakam* which is the sixth chapter of *Cintāmaṇi*. I was trying to see in what possible ways the following chapters could be further improved. I had till then indicated in footnotes the source of some of the illustrations occurring in Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's commentary. But so far I had not identified the source of all the quotations. In the belief that I could trace the source of many more if I tried hard enough I began searching through all ancient manuscripts available to me.

One day in the evening I took up for examination a bundle of palmleaves that I had with me. The beginning and the end were missing. On the top leaf was the title — *Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai*. As I read this copy which had belonged to Śrī Piḷḷai I came upon more and more quotations occurring in the commentary on *Cintāmaṇi*. I thought with regrets, "Really! What a pity I had not given this manuscript the attention it deserved earlier!" And I continued my reading. After *Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai* came *Ciṟupāṇāṟṟuppaṭai*. Then there was *Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaṭai*, *Mullaippāṭṭu and Maturaikkāñci*. As I went on reading that copy together with its commentary, a solitary stanza came into my mind beginning with the words *muruku porunāṟu*. Till then I had not realized that the manuscript before me was in fact the *Pattupāṭṭu!* As I read on and on, I identified more and more of the quotations found in the *Cintāmaṇi* commentary. As I was reading the text, I was not so much interested in the content of the poems. All I had in mind was to trace the source of the quotations in the commentary on *Cintāmaṇi*. So I was trying to find out where all those quotations occurred. My labours were not lost. When I began to scrutinize those old palmleaf manuscripts it might have been eight o'clock in the night Kriṣṇa Aiyar was with me then. By nine he had gone to sleep. I persued with renewed zeal the texts of *Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai*, *Ciṟupāṇāṟṟuppaṭai and Mullaippāṭṭu*. I forgot completely the passage of time. *Maturaikkāñci* was the last poem in the incomplete copy. I finished reading it and looked up. It was dawn, past five in the morning! Even then I did not go to sleep. I went in my mind again and again over my discoveries and was thrilled.

Kiruṣṇaiyar woke up. "What is this? You haven't slept at all in the night, have you!" I answered with tremendous joy: "Sleep? Do you imagine how many treasures I've discovered in this one night?!" He did not at all understand. "I have discovered the *Pattuppāṭṭu!*" I shouted. "*Moreover, I've got hold of a number of quotations occurring in the commentary on Cintāmaṇi!*" "You're Śiva's favourite", was all he answered.

## Puṟanāṉūṟu

From that day on I made it a habit to examine all the *Eṭṭuttokai* manuscripts I had with me, leaf by leaf, line by line, letter by letter. I took up another palmleaf book, similarly shorn of the beginning and the closing sheets. I untied the strings. The first phrase *Koṟṟuṟaikkuṟṟila* met my eyes. I was stunned. It was the same phrase that had been quoted by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar as illustration in his Commentary on *Cintāmaṇi*. But, true to his manner of presentation, he wrote under it, "so have said others too". I knew that the work before me was an ancient classic; apart from that I did not know what work it was. I found both text and commentary side by side. At the end of that poem was visible the number 95.

I had with me a manuscript that contained the plain text of *Naṟṟiṇai* and other works, and so I looked what stanza number 95 would be like in each. As I turned the leaves I discovered that the leaf before me was part of a commentary on *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. Therefore, I put down all quotations to be found in these leaves under the heading *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. I read all the other palmleaves. Then I read again, with closer attention, *Tirukkōvaiyār*, and *Patiṉeṇkīḻkkaṇakku*, and identified many more quotations. In my edition of the parts of the epic following the *Kēmacariyār Ilampakam*, I gave these quotations in my footnotes. I indicated the ancient sources of these illustrations quoted in Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's commentary, and in addition printed them with the lines leading to, and following, those quoted by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar. I was of the opinion that in this way the style and the literary qualities of the poems quoted from would be better revealed than if I would have quoted simply the title of the source. In some instances I included in my notes the whole text of the relevant *Puṟanāṉūṟu* verse. Those quotations which I could not include in the footnotes I wrote out separately, planning to collect them and put them in an appendix to the book.

When the holidays were over I returned in unusually high spirits to Kumpakōṇam. I announced to all my friends with joy the new discoveries I had made. At that time, the Tamil pandit at the Kumpakōṇam Native High School, Kuṭavāyil Ai. Caṇmukam Piḷḷai by name, was studying with me a few texts; he was a very intelligent fellow, and had spotless knowledge. Hearing all my enthusiastic reports, he was tremendously delighted.

I worked like a slave day and night, wishing to see the *Cintāmaṇi* finished as soon as possible. There are many points raised in its final portion, *Mutti Ilampakam,* concerning Jaina doctrines. From time to time I took them up for discussion with Viṭūr Appacāmi Nayiṉār and with Cantiranāta Ceṭṭiyar in Kumpakōṇam. In my edition of the text I included them in the footnotes.

### My younger brother's marriage

*Cintāmaṇi* was nearing its completion. In June of 1888, my younger brother Cirañcīvi Cuntarēcaiyar married Śrī Maṅkaḷāmpikai who was the daughter of N. Vēṅkaṭarāmaiyar of Kumpakōṇam, a lawyer from the Paktapuri Akkirākāram, and the elder sister of Rao Bahadur K. V. Kiruṣṇacāmi Aiyar. My Jaina friends, those well-acquaited with me, used to joke, with a certain amount of satisfaction: "You're about to publish *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* which is also known as 'The Book of Marriages.' That's why you have now a real marriage in your family."

## Chapter 99

## Joys and sorrows

Even though *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* was in the press, I was thinking of yet further palmleaf copies which could be useful for comparison even at that stage. Among the palmleaf scripts which I had obtained thanks to the help of Śrī Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, those which originated in the Tirunelvēli area were clear and fine. While he was on his pilgrimage in that region I had noticed there from place to place Tamil scholars coming to pay him homage, who had poetry as their family vocation for generations. I had become acquainted with them. I learned that they had in their possession many hundreds of Tamil palmleaf manuscripts, and that they took good care of them. I was hoping to get a few more copies of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* if I went there to search for palmleaf scripts in person. So at a certain day I undertook a pilgrimage in search of ancient manuscripts.

### The trip to Tirunelvēli

I set out on an auspicious day and went straight to Tirunelvēli. Having met a few people there, I proceeded to Mēlakaram which is situated on the road to Tirukkuṟṟālam. That place is the birth-place of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. His younger brother, Tirikūṭa Rācappa Kavirāyar lived there. I could not find any copy of *Cintāmaṇi* while searching among old manuscripts in his house. Therefore I proceeded to Tirukkuṟṟālam, offered worship for Tirikūṭācalapati, and then went to Ceṅkōṭṭai. The descendant of the great poet Kavirāca Paṇṭāram lived in that town. I went to his house, introduced myself, and searched among the palm-leaf books in his house. There was a lot of *pirapantams* and *purāṇams* there. Of *Cintāmaṇi* I found only a few sections.

Subsequently I went to the nearby villages of Kiruṣṇāpuram and Kaṭaiyanallūr, and when I searched in the houses of the scholarly poets residing there, I found again only a few portions of *Cintāmaṇi.* At that time I was given a paper manuscript copy of the *Cintāmaṇi* by Cēṟṟūr Cuppiramaṇiyakavirāyar who had obtained it from its owner, Kumāracāmi Piḷḷai, Tamil Pandit at Caldwell College, Tirunelvēli. It was complete. This was a copy of the version which had belonged to Tūttukkuṭi Vīrapāṇṭiya Kavirāyar; as it was a well-preserved correct copy, it was of great use to me.

## The gentleman from Ceṅkōṭṭai

There was a gentleman at Ceṅkōṭṭai who had already subscribed to *Cintāmaṇi* previously. When the friend who had come with me asked him for the subscription money he said, "I don't want this man's edition. It is full of mistakes, isn't it? I intend to go for a clean edition prepared by another scholar." So he was reported to have announced. When I heard about it, I regretted that there should be people even in Ceṅkōṭṭai engaged in mud-slinging of this sort. I thought: 'Enough of this searching for palmleaves; now it's vitally important to bring out the book as fast as possible'. And I returned at once to Kumpakōṇam.

## The praise from Aṣṭāvatāṉam Capāpati Mutaliyār

With the above-mentioned intention in mind, I used to go to Madras for attending to my publishing work every time when I could get no more than just two days leave at one stretch. During one such trip I went to see Aṣṭāvatāṉam Capāti Mutaliyār. I loved to see him because he was an excellent and wise scholar, in spite of the frightful warning he had given me previously to drop my *Cintāmaṇi* venture. He was a widely read person; and his manner of talking was most engaging. One day we talked for a long time. Our conversation ranged wide over many poets and many Tamil books. Every now and then I found occasion to quote a number of ancient stanzas. I quoted classics after classics, without restraint, mostly from the *pirapantams* and *purāṇams* I had studied with Śrī Piḷḷai. Suddenly Mutaliyār, as if struck by a new thought, exclaimed, "Sir, you are certainly quite competent to edit the *Cintāmaṇi!*" This remark had nothing to do with the topic we were discussing. But Mutaliyār had been watching me all through our talk, forming his own judgement about the extent of my training in Tamil literature. He might have felt an urge to take back what he had once said to me. I was quite amazed and very pleased. I asked him, "Why are you saying this so suddenly?"

"Haven't I told you one day some time ago to give up the idea of publishing the *Cintāmaṇi?* Now I wonder what had made me say so then. Only now have I truly learnt the full measure of your wide Tamil learning," he said, and went on praising me.

That whole day I felt like floating on the joy caused by his words. But something else fell on my ears which robbed me of that pleasure.

### Some venomous mischief-mongers

On another ray I went to see Pūṇṭi Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār. He made his usual kind enquiry as to the progress I had made with *Cintāmaṇi*. I told him in detail. He then said with some regret, "I had the occasion to meet Pāskara Cētupati, the Raja of Irāmanātapuram. He is very fond of Tamil. Your edtion of *Cintāmaṇi* was mentioned in the conversation. He said he already knew about it, and added that someone had declared to him that you were absolutely incompetent to publish such an excellent classic. How many venomous mischief-mongers there are to frustrate and obstruct a good enterprise!" As I heard this, the world ceased to be a place of joy for me, as it had been a while ago.

Seeing my sad countenance, Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār cheered me up greatly with what he said next: "You should turn a deaf ear to all such talk. You should persevere in your task till you succeed. Don't I know your capacity well? Be brave and go on with your work. Some of my friends have signed the subscription-book you had left with me. Cavalai Rāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār, Pammal Vijayaraṅka Mutaliyār and a few others have placed their signatures quite enthusiastically."

### Irācakōpāla Piḷḷai

On another occation I visited Irācakōpāla Piḷḷai of Kōmaḷīcuvaran Pēṭṭai. He was a professor of Tamil at Madras Presidency 'College. At the time that I went to see him, he had with him a *vidvān* from Kāñcipuram, by name of Irāmacāmi Nāyuṭṭu who was the author of a number of commentaries, and became later known as Irāmāṉanta Yōki.

Irācakōpāla Piḷḷai had publised in print the entire *Pākavatam*. A few parts of it were prescribed one year for the B.A. examinations. I had been acquainted with the *Pākavatam* even before I commenced my studies with Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai. I remembered having seen many versions of palm leaf manuscripts of the *Pākavatam*. In the edition of Irācakōpāla Piḷḷai, the poet's name was given as "Āriyappa pulavar". Also, there was an introductory stanza of worship on Caṭakōpar beginning with *Cintakattuk kīḻamarnta* seated under tamarind tree. I had never seen any of these in the palm-leaf copies known to me. So, I asked Irācakōpāla Piḷḷai, "I could not find the name of the poet in any of the copies of this work I have seen. And this stanza wasn't there either. Where have you found it?" To my amazement he answered, "I have not edited and published this work! I saw only a few chapters. Someone has borrowed my name and printed the thing with it! I am not responsible for this!" Only later I learnt that the poet who had composed this *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* was one of the Vēmpattūr group, Cevvai Cūṭuvār, and that the introductory poem was inserted into the edition by the publishers.

### What was intended and what happened

With the intention to help me in any possible way in my publishing of Cintāmaṇi, Pūṇṭi Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār has succeeded in having *Nāmakaḷ Ilampakam* prescribed for B. A. examinations. He thought that if I would publish that particular portion separately, many copies would be sold, and this would bring me also some financial profit. As I was at the time in Kumpakōṇam I was not informed of that scheme immediately. Cōṭacāvatāṉam Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār was the one involved in writing glosses on texts prescribed for examinations in colleges and high schools. He was also engaged in having them printed and sold. He used to sell the copies with the help of his friends in various places who would induce school-children to buy them. He wrote in this matter to Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār and later to me. I then would receive the books myself, inform about it to many schools, and advise the students to buy them. He was one of those who gave me regular assistance with the reading of *Cintāmaṇi* proofs. As soon as he learned that *Namakaḷ Ilampakam* had been prescribed for examinations at the University level, he printed it himself and published it — entirely without my knowledge. This has caused me much trouble and sadness. Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār, too, was worried and disappointed: "I intended one thing — and an entirely different thing happened." After that I informed Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār that he need not read the proofs anymore.

From time to time my friend and editor of *Vivēkacintāmaṇi*, Ci. Vi. Cāminātaiyar, as well as Vicuvanāta Piḷḷai of Jaffna, used to write and publish reports about the progress of my *Cintāmaṇi* edition in the *Cutēcamittiraṉ*. A number of well-wishers learned thus about my work from the newspaper and wrote to me for further enquiries. Uṟṟumalai Zamindar Hirutayālaya Marutappat Tēvar who had subscribed earlier sent me a hundred rupees. The mayor of Palghat, Rao Bahadur Pa. Ai. Ciṉṉacāmi Piḷḷai, used to write often, asking simply, "How far have you progressed?"

## Letters from Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai

Ci. Vai. Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai, who was now in Putukkōṭṭai, used to write frequent letters, too. He was then engaged in an edition of *Kalittokai* with commentary. He wrote to me asking me to read for him the entire proofs of that text.

"Since absolutely all my time and attention is dedicated to the editing of *Cintāmaṇi*, I am now unable to take on any other work", I wrote back. However, he was not discouraged, kept writing and, whatmore, kept sending me the proofs of *Kalittokai*. I could simply not refuse his constant pleas for help, and so I read a few parts of the text and suggested to him in writing the emendations and corrections as they had occurred to me. He has adopted them with pleasure and gratefully. I, too, have gathered a few quotations from that *Kalittokai* edition as occurring in the commentary on *Cintāmaṇi*. He also kept constantly informing me about the progress of his edition of *Ilakkaṇaviḷakkam* and of *Tolkāppiyam*. From all this I could feel his great and sincere desire to publish ancient Tamil classics. In my answering letters I informed him in turn about the progress of my *Cintāmaṇi* edition.

## I borrow money

I simply had not enough money to pay for the labour involved in the work of printing, for the paper used, and some other expenses. Although many people had originally subscribed, only relatively few actually sent the money. When a letter arrived from Madras asking me to send money to pay the workers and buy the paper, and I computed the sum, I was horrified. It was necessary to send at once a hundred and fifty rupees. On that occasion I wrote to a few gentlemen who had subscribed. A few of them helped at once and sent the money.

On another occasion paper was necessary to print some forms. The proprietor of the printing press wrote a letter demanding the money immediately. I had none. I did not know what to do. Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai, informed about my painful situation, wrote to me at once to contact a businessman who dealt in paper, a Mr. Ṣaṇmukam Ceṭṭiyār, whom he knew well, telling me that I might obtain the necessary paper from him, and that he would be willing to wait a few months to be paid. He wrote to me as well as to the shop-keeper at Madras, and arranged for the delivery of the paper necessary for printing. The price of the paper was hundred and fifty rupees. Since I was in no position to get the money together within the time allowed, I had to borrow the money from several colleagues — the teachers at the College — and sent it off. Such and similar exigencies were quite frequent. At such times I became impatient, thinking, 'I wish this *Cintāmaṇi* would be finished at once! When will all these troubles end?'

## Chapter 100

## The Cintāmaṇi is published

The greater part of the text of *Cintāmaṇi* with its commentary had been printed. In those days, the majority of Tamil printed books had no introduction or foreword. I knew how useful such a thing would be to the reader, and I thought that I might write out and include such texts as a part of the volume. I thought of all the points I should include in such Introduction. I felt it would be best to prepare the reader by telling him about the greatness of the poem, the character of the commentary and notes, and the chief topics the poem dealt with. The first thing I did was to prepare a sort of index with the stanzas identified by their opening words in alphabetical order.

### Quotations

Even as the printing of the book went on, I had given the source of each illustrative quotation I had been able to trace as foot notes. Then I wrote out two separate lists, one of those known, another of those yet unknown. I decided that I would put all that in an appendix to the book.

I also decided to write brief biographies of the author of the poem and the commentator, and include them after the Introduction.

### Brief version of the story

Since *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* was a literary work not current in the Tamil country, I believed a prose version of the story would be helpful to readers. Since giving a prose-version of a poem of over three thousand stanzas would apparently prove a task which could not be finished easily, I came to the conclusion that I should write a synopsis of Cīvakaṉ's story alone, and I completed it in a way without breaking the central thread of the narrative. I read it out to those colleagues in the College who were closely acquainted with me, and to my Jaina friends. They heard it out, approved, and offered certain suggestions. Some of them I liked and adopted.

## The poet's biography and similar problems

Subsequently, I could find no data for writing an account of Tiruttakkatēvar's life; he is the author of the poem. So I fell back on the Jaina oral-audial traditions, on data related to me by way of mouth, and I shaped them into a cogent narrative which I somehow wrote out.

For Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's life I had the support of two laudatory verses prefixed to his commentary. Taking these two as my main data I wrote out the life of that magnificent commentator. I listed the other works too on which he had written his commentaries. When I referred to his gloss on *Pattuppāṭṭu,* I gave the names of the ten poems of that collection, with names of authors and names of heroes for each. I knew this would be a fresh information to the people of Tamilnadu.

Then I completed a separate alphabetical glossary of names occurring in Cīvakaṉ's story, under the heading "List of appellations".

## Introduction

As I began writing the Introduction, I first referred to the excellence of the poem, and the wealth of data revealed through it:

"This *Cīvakacintāmaṇi,* composed by the Jaina saint Tiruttukkatēvar, is the first among the Five Epics that are the most excellent works of the literary Tamil language. It is one of the authoritative books on which the author of ancient commentaries on literary and grammatical texts draw copiously for their illustrations; its high literary Tamil style is as distinguished as that of that inspired literary works of those divine poets who had delved deeply into Tamil constituting, in olden times, the First, the Middle, and the Last *Caṅkams;* like Vālmīki's work in Sanskrit, it is entitled to the status of a Great Epic, since it contains all the descriptive and other features essential to such work; besides, it is said to have been, like Vālmīki's work, the model for many great poets of subsequent ages when they composed their supremely charming epics following it even in detailed descriptions."

Having written thus far I read it over many times correcting it repeatedly. Since I had entered this field for the first time then, I was rather anxious to acquire a good name. Also, I intended to keep out everything that might appear incorrect and wrong. Therefore I scrutinized repeatedly what I had written, correcting and polishing it. On account of my inexperience I was seized with doubt and dread at the end of each sentence. 'Was I right to compare this work with Vālmīki? What shall I do if I displease Sanskrit scholars? Again, I have said that it had been a model for later works; would not the Śaivites and the Vaiṣṇavites be angered at me for speaking in that way about a Jaina work?' I was really worried. But I wrote on, boldly, thinking, 'I shall write down whatever appears to be, in my own opinion and judgement, right; I shall modify it later, if I find something wrong.' Having written about the book, I went on mentioning my research and matters connected with the publishing, and how my well-beloved friend Srī Cēlam Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār had urged me to publish the *Cintāmaṇi*, how he offered me his copy of the book, and how I mananged to get hold of many further copies.

## The adversities I suffered

I stated briefly the adversities I suffered while researching those manuscript copies:

"The difficulties and vexations suffered were many, while trying to arrive at the true shape of the poems and of the commentary, as a result of incessant study and frequent comparison of many ancient and damaged copies of the commentary on this book, where letters and words were often wrongly spelt, multiplied, omitted or reversed; to distinguish and tell, within the commentary itself, what was a detailed gloss and what a paraphrase; to decide where a quotation began and where it ended; to recognize how the paraphrase was joined to the underlying text; to decide when to discard an error as an error; to make a supreme effort to correctly interpret the meaning. Even then, complete understanding seems to be impossible in a few places where the division is apparent into the Tamil of music and the Tamil of dramas, and in a few other portions. The reason for this is the fact that there are nowadays no books or other works dealing with the Tamil of music and the Tamil of drama!"

## My attitude

My mind felt sore when I saw again and again variant readings, differing widely between one manuscript and another. Even in contexts where it seemed to me that a certain emendation would improve the meaning, I printed the text as I found it in the manuscript. In fact, I published the text very carefully, refraining from importing into the *Cintāmaṇi* my own opinions or corrections. The book I had taken up for publishing was for me like the idol of a deity. My desire was to remove the accretions of dirt, and behold it in its proper armour; it was never my intention to set a crooked arm aright, or to alter the shape of even a fingernail. I believed that every atom of it was a divine particle. I knew well the difference between removing the dirt and polishing the image, and altering the formation of its limbs. I tried to explain this attitude thus: "Since it is my opinion that ancient Tamil texts and their commentaries should retain their old shape without it being altered at all I would never be bold enough to publish them so as to add to what had not been in the manuscript copies, or change what has been there, or take away from it. I have published as I have found the scripts, interpreting in the best way I could. I have done nothing to bring *myself* into it."

I have not forgotten this vow from that day to this. If one wants to understand clearly the meaning of the Tamil literature flourishing many centuries ago, of books that had been forgotten for a considerable time between, one needs a thorough knowledge of the historical background of that particular literature, as well as the pertinent literary conventions. Such a full understanding is for us impossible, coming, as we do, after a vast gulf of time. I was capable of having the patience to wait for entlightenment wherever matters were not clear to me, and to expect that the discrepancies could be reconciled in due time, refusing to proclaim them at once to be irreconcilable contradictions. My friends had slight aversion against such diffidence on my part. I refused to alter my attitude.

## Those who helped

After having written about the nature of the palmleaf copies, I described those who had rendered me financial help, and the more prominent among those who had shared with me the labours of seeing the book through the press. I concluded the Introduction with a detailed account of the manuscripts I had consulted. It was then that I felt relief and delight, as if the whole work of publishing the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* had ended at last. Taking all that with me I reached Madras.

## A copy of Pattuppāṭṭu

When I had finished the last portions of the book, handed them, with the Introduction, to the printer, and corrected their first proofs, a great joy came over me, and I thought, 'By the grace of God, a good thing is finished!' The next moment, a great weariness set in. That enormous physical fatigue which I had not known while working all the time day and night on my text now seized me and pounced upon me as if it had been lying in wait for just the moment when I finished my labours. I lay down in a corner of the building of the press and slept; it was a happy, sweet sleep.

When I awoke after my sleep, someone who had come there before and had been waiting for me, placed a palmleaf book in my hands with the words, "Here, take this please, the *Pattuppāṭṭu.*" I looked up at his face. I recognized the donor as Kumāracāmi Aiyar, a Vīraśaiva from Vēlūr. He was the son-in-law of the great Tamil savant, Vicākapperumāḷ Aiyar. He spent his days in going from one house of old scholars to another, searching for palmleaf manuscripts stacked away without any further use, and taking these palmleaves either as free gifts, or for some little sum, getting them from the womenfolk and other persons who were not interested in them, he would then sell them to those who needed them and wished to have them. I had once previously told him, "If you'd come across *Pattuppāṭṭu* and other collections of *Caṅkam* poetry, get them for me. I'll pay well."

His giving me the copy of *Pattuppāṭṭu* at that particular moment seemed to me to be a good omen indeed. I thought, 'Goddess Tamil, our Mother, calls me to keep up my services in Her cause.' I gave him at once the fifty rupees he asked for, took the manuscript, sent him away, and addressed this devout prayer to the Goddess: "Mother, you have adorned yourself again with this Jewel — *Cintāmaṇi* — through this humble servant of yours. Vouchsafe it unto me, your serf, to take me under your protection, and employ me further, granting me your grace, in the task of burnishing your other jewels too with these two hands of mine!"

# Chapter 101

# To the delight of my friends

The printing was finished of the Introduction to *Cintāmaṇi*, of the synopsis of the story, and of other additional portions. There were no facilities at the printing press for the binding of the book. Upon enquiries I found out that a certain Murukēca Mutaliyār had the necessary skills and was rather honest and reliable; so I decided to recommend to the printers to deliver up the printed forms to him. It was, however, necessary to pay the amount of money needed to the printing establishment. I felt that it is better to pay the printer and then request him to deliver the forms to the binder. But I did not have the money; so, I went to Tiruvallikkēṇi, approached my friend Vicuvanāta Cāstiri who was a clerk of an Englishman, Mr. Norton, and asked him for a loan of three hundred rupees, promising to return him the amount within a few weeks with interest. He lent me the money under those conditions, and that was a timely help. I gave the necessary amount at once to the proprietor of the printing works. He in his turn delivered all printed forms to the binder.

## Worship of Perumāḷ

As it was Saturday on that day, I went and worshipped Lord Pārttasārati Perumāḷ in the temple of Tiruvallikkēṇi. In the temple I met a few Vaiṣṇava scholars, and talked to them. They praised me for my achievement of having finished the edition of *Cintāmaṇi*. One of them was Vai. Mu. Caṭakōparāmāṉujācāriyar. I saw him then for the very first time. He was then just sixteen years old. He seemed to me to be a very energetic and intelligent youth. I thought, 'This lad will be famous one day.' Our friendship increased steadily from that day on.

## The praise of Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār

After the worship of Lord Perumāḷ I went home and slept without a single worry.

We printed five hundred copies of *Cintāmaṇi*. Of these about a hundred were wasted, as a result of the printer's neglect.

Next day, a Sunday, the binder gave a bound copy as a specimen. I took it and went to Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār.

When I showed him the book, he burst into an indescribable shout of joy. "So you have accomplished the great task you set yourself! Now you must take up *Cilappatikāram* and other works, and publish them like this, too," he said.

"I can do that," I answered. "But money is needed for all that. Where shall I go for it? Yesterday I had to borrow three hundred rupees from Vicuvanāta Cāstirikaḷ, to able to take the copies from the press." And I described to him in detail the events of the previous day.

Mutaliyār was very sorry to hear it. "If you'll demand the money from the subscribers they'll give it," he said. "You may repay the loan with it."

"But I've got to start this very night for Kumpakōṇam, and be in the College tomorrow morning. To whom can I go and ask for the money in such haste?"

"If that is so, I shall go and ask for you, and give the money to Cāstiriyār. Only Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār you must see yourself. He'll definitely give you the money."

I started for Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār's house, thinking, 'When he sees this book, he'll be tremendously pleased; he'll certainly help me as he had promised.' He was in his room. It might have been four in the afternoon. Hearing that I had come to see him, he sent word, "I'm now busy with examination work, I can't spare a minute. I'm sorry I can't see him. Let him come tomorrow morning, if he wants to see me." I went with great hopes, and so I was unexpectedly and terribly disappointed. I said to myself, 'It's man's lot to meet both good fortune and bad luck at the same time', informed Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār about what had happened, and started for Kumpakōṇam that same night.

## The trip

Because of my distress I had not eaten that whole day. But I was repeatedly looking at the bound copy of *Cintāmaṇi*, turning it over again and again in my hand, and I felt happy. At the railway station I was met by the Tamil pandit of the C. S. M. school, P. M. Śrīnivāsācāriyar who was full of praise for the finished edition of *Cintāmaṇi*. He expressed his joy with these odd words: "They say that the representative of the East India Company, Clive, was welcomed, by the Company directors, with boundless exultation when he returned to his country after he had vanquished his enemies and won for the Company many territories. When I see you I have to think of him."

## Stanzas written to Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār

I alighted at Kumpakōṇam next day in the morning. All my friends expressed their joy and pleasure at the successful accomplishment of the *Cintāmaṇi* edition. The day after I remembered Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār. 'Didn't he tell me to come next day? Well, I left without seeing him; whatever will he think of me!' With this thought in mind I began to compose a letter to him — a letter in verse. All in all I wrote four different stanzas.

*Kulattiṉāṟ pulavar meccum kuṇattiṉāṟ palanū lâyum*
*pulattiṉāṟ ṟicaiyaḷakkum pukaḻiṉāṟ puraiyil vāymai*
*valattiṉā laṭuttōrt tāṅkum vaṉmaiyāl vaṉmai mikka*
*nalattiṉāṟ ṟikaḻa-nātamā mukilī tōrka*

Scholars praise
Your family and your goodness.
Your scholarly research in
Many texts

Spreads your fame far and wide.
With your strength of
Faultless truth,
You support those
Who come for help.
Araṅkanāta!
The cloud,
Strong in character,
Please listen to me.

*ṭiruttakumā muṉivaṉaruḷ teḷḷiyacin tāmaṇiyait tiruvi lātēṉ*
*varuttamika vāyntacciṟ patippittu muṭittaperu makiḻvai yōtum*
*karuttuṭaiye¯ṉākiyanta nūlaiyuṅkaik koṭuniṉṉaik kāṇa vantum*
*peruttavapāk kiyameṉṉait taṭuttamaiyāl niṉaikkāṇap peṟṟi lēṉāl.*

I, a poor one,
With immense troubles,
Completed printing
Cintāmaṇi, pure and serene,
Of the great poet
Tiruttakka Tēvar.
I came to you,
With a book
To reveal my happiness.
But, unfortunate I am;
Fate prevented me;
I couldn't see you.

*āyiṉuniṉ aṉpuṭaimai yeṉṉaḷavu makalāteṉ ṟakattiṟ koṇṭē*
*tāyiṉumaṉ pamaintilaku mirāmacā mikkuricil taṉpāṟ piṉṉar*
*mēyiṉaṉiṉ pālviḷampa veṇṇiyavelā mavaṉpāl viḷampi vantēṉ*
*nīyiriru vīrkaḷumōr maṉamuṭaiyī reṉpataṉai niṉaintē maṉṉō.*

Yet, I trusting that
Your kindness will never desert me,
Went to the patron
Irāmācāmi, kinder than a mother,
And told him
What I had wanted
To convey to you,
And came here.
Both of you
Have the same feelings
Towards me;
And I knew it well.

*itupoḻuti leṉakkiṉṟiryamaiyāta tiṉṉateṉa iyalpā vōrnta*
*matuviravun toṭaippuyattu vaḷḷalē veḷippaṭaiyā vaḻaṅka veṉṉeñ*
*catutuṇivuṟ ṟilatāṉiṉ ṟirumukamāṟ ṟaṅkēṭkum ācai yēṟkuk*
*katumeṉavē makiḻvumika niṉatutiru mukamāṟṟam kāṇac ceyyē.*

Oh patron!
With a garland
Full of honey
Hanging on your shoulders
Who knows by nature
What I need in time.
I haven't had the strength
To tell you openly
What I need.
I am anxious to
Hear from you, a letter,
Please let me see it soon,
To my happiness.

*aṉṟeṉaik kāṇa nayantaṉai yaiya amayamov vāmaiyā lamaivāyc*
*ceṉṟaṉai niṉṉaik kaṇṭilāk kuṟaiya teṉṉatē ciṟṟari vuṭaiyēṉ*
*oṉṟala palavām piḻaiceyat takumē uttama kuṇamoruṅ kuṭaiyāy*
*kaṉṟiṉaik kārāk kaḷiyuṟak kākkum kaṉivoṭu kamittaṉin kaṭaṉē.*

You wanted to see me
That day, when I was
Unable to see you and
You left patiently.
It is my fault that you
Couldn't see me.
A person of immature intellect
Would do, not one
But many a mistake.
Oh you! an embodiment of
Good conduct!
The cow jealously protects
The calf.
To tolerate it so kindly
Is your duty.

Two days after having written the letter I received a reply from Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār as expected. It contained seven stanzas, a brief note, and a demand draft for fifty rupees. The note said he had given another fifty rupees to Cēlam Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār. I found his poems overflowing with true affection. In one of them he expressed sincere regret for having been unable to see me.

*marutaṉacī vakacintā maṇikkuraiyai māṇpulavar*
*viruntеṉakkoḷ vakaiyaḷittāy vēṟiyampal vēṇṭumatō*
*peruntimiram pōkkuvittāy pēraṟivi ṉātavaṉaip*
*poruntīram peṟṟaṉaiyē puttakamum peṟṟēṉē*

You gave as a feast
To the great poets
The medicine like

Cīvakacintāmaṇi with its commentary.
What more could I say?
You drove away the
Darkness, thick.
You are like the sun
With your immense intellect.
You attained encomiums and
I received the book.

Reading the letter, my heart swelled with joy. I have at once composed eight stanzas[1] to express my gratitude, and sent them off as my reply. In his letter, Mutaliyār had observed that his poems were 'without worth and substance'. As a reply to this, I wrote in one of my stanzas, 'Since money has arrived along with your verses, they certainly are full of worth and substance; it is rather my stanzas that are worthless.'

*poruḷilāp pāṭṭeṉṟu pukaṉṟaṉainī naviṉṟacuvai poḻiyum pāvaip*
*poruḷilāp pāṭalkaḷeṉ pāṭalporu ḷuṉapāṭal ḷuṉapāṭal pukaḻniṉ pāṭal*
*poruḷuṭaṉē viraviyañcal vaḻivanta ceyaloṉṟē poruntum cāṉṟām*
*poruḷilā veṉaiyumoru poruḷākkoḷ nayacukuṇap pukaḻkkō māṉē*

You said your verses,
The sweet verses you composed
Has no *poruḷ* (good ideas).
No, my verses have no *poruḷ* (good ideas / money).
Your act of sending by post
The money *(poruḷ)* is
Good proof for it.
Oh the famous, sweet and good!
I am a poor one *(poruḷilā)*
Take me as a *poruḷ* (something worthy).

At the end of a week the binder sent me from Madras, packed in a box, one hundred bound copies of *Cintāmaṇi*. Mother took them out, arranged them on bench decorated with *kōlams*, placed a garland of flowers on top, lighted camphor before it, waved a plateful of turmeric powder and water to ward off evil, and placed the books in my hands with her blessings. Father watched, eyes overflowing with tears of joy.

There was a downpour that day. In spite of it, I placed a few copies of the book in a cart, and drove round to hand them over to the Kumpakōṇam subscribers. I went first to Cātu Cēṣaiyar. He received his copy and gave me his blessings. Then I met my other friends one by one, delivered the book, and returned home at noon.

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[1] These eight stanzas can be seen in my article on Arankanāta Mutaliyār Carittiram in *Nallurakkōvai* Part I published by me.

## Arrival of Irāmaliṅka Tēcikar

Irāmaliṅka Tēcikar arrived at six o'clock that evening. He was the one who had studied with me; he has earned certain things by giving lectures on *Caivam* in Colombo and Jaffna. Among the few presents which he had brought for me was an ebony elephant. I liked that elephant most of all the things he had given me. I used to think of it as of a symbol of the elephant-faced god of success under whose protection I hoped to stand.

While he was telling me about some influential people in Śri Lanka, he said, "Srī P. Kumāracuvāmi Mutaliyār told me that he wanted fifteen copies of your *Cintāmaṇi;* he said he would sell them and send you the money. He is a very wealthy man, and fond of Tamil." So, I indeed sent those books to Kumāracuvāmi Mutaliyār, along with a letter.

## Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar is happy

The next day I went to Tiruvāvaṭuturai with some more copies and submitted them to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar. He received the books with great eagerness, and looked with delight at the title page, the Introduction, the biography of the poet and items like that, at the text itself and the commentary.

Two gentlemen who stayed in the town then - Poṉṉōtuvār and Makāliṅkam Piḷḷai - came to pay their respects to Tēcikar. They had both been to Sri Lanka, to study *Kamparāmāyaṇam* and some other texts with Śrī Āṟumuka Nāvalar's son-in-law Poṉṉaiyā Piḷḷai in Jaffna, and stayed there for some time. Tēcikar addressed them saying, "Poṉṉaiyā Piḷḷai wrote to us that he was going to publish the *Cintāmaṇi;* how far has he proceeded? Is the thing ready?"

"There is nothing of that sort there. He has published in print the *Irakuvamcam.* He had given us two copies — one for His Holiness and one for this gentleman and a letter for this gentleman, too." With these words I was presented a copy of the *Irakuvamcam* accompanied by a letter. In the letter Poṉṉaiyā Piḷḷai wrote that he was very eager to see my edition of the *Cintāmaṇi*, and whether I would send him a copy.

I finished my audience with Tēcikar, took leave of him, returned to Kumpakōṇam, and sent a copy of my edition along with a letter. I wrote in that letter as follows: "No other mountain but the Mantara knows the depth of the Ocean of Milk. Like that, you alone know the depth of the *Cintāmaṇi*. Somehow I have succeeded in publishing it. Please receive it with kind approval."

Subsequently I sent the copies of the book, along with pertinent letters, to subscribers out of town. Many have responded positively, with words of praise. Many have even sent poems. Many have sent the money they had promised to send. To Tañcāvūr and Tirucciṟāppaḷḷi I went in person, to deliver the copies of the book to the benefactors who had subscribed for it.

## The praise of Śrīnivāca Piḷḷai

First I went to Tañcāvūr, and visited there my friend, the lawyer Śrīnivāca Piḷḷai, Kalyāṇa Cuntara Aiyar, and a few others, and distributed the book among them. Śrīnivāca Piḷḷai scrutinized the *Cintāmaṇi* and reading what all the books contained in the three anthologies of *Eṭṭuttokai*, *Pattuppāṭṭu* and *Patiṉeṇkīḻkkaṇakku*, mentioned in Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's biography, he was truly astonished. "But these seem to be books by far superior to anything studied even by the greatest of scholars!" he exclaimed. "It is because of these that Tamil is an infinite ocean of immortal delight!" He was almost beside himself, unable to check his surprise and joy. "Aren't you a lucky man!" he shouted. I said, "I'm going to see Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār." Śrīnivāca Piḷḷai had been Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār's student and he respected him as if he were a God. He said at once, "You certainly should; he must see this, and he will for sure appreciate this treasure and you!" He bade me leave. I started for Tiruccirāppaḷḷi.

## Chapter 102

## Next Book

While I was engaged in preparing the *Cintāmaṇi* for print, the authorities of the Śrīraṅkam High School informed me that they were looking for a good Tamil pandit, and that I should send one. I sent them Mu. Cāminātaiyar who had studied with me, and spent a short time at Tiruvāvaṭuturai.

### Ma. Vī. Rāmānujācāriyār[1]

He agreed to take up that job, and performed it in a manner that satisfied both the school authorities and the students. He also got a few subscriptions for my *Cintāmaṇi* edition. Though he was behaving decently with everyone, because of certain inconveniences, he that particular appointment, and went somewhere else, to a place no one was aware of. Hence it was necessary to appoint someone else to the post. A person connected with the school approached me and asked me again to recommend a suitable *pandit*. At first I thought that it would be good if Tirumāṉūr. A. Kiruṣṇaiyar could be appointed. But as he had just then arrived at Madras to help substantially with the publication of *Cintāmaṇi* I decided to search for someone else.

I looked up at Ma. Rāmānujācāriyār who was then studying at Tiruvāvaṭuturai, and asked him to fill in the vacancy till Kiruṣṇaiyar would come back from Madras and join the school in Śrīraṅkam; it was a question of only a few months. He agreed, and did get the job. As soon as *Cintāmaṇi* was finished, Kiruṣṇaiyar went to śrīraṅkam and took over from Rāmānujācāriyār. At the time when I was going to see Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār, Kiruṣṇaiyar was teaching in Śrīraṅkam.

### The supreme delight of Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār

I left Tañcāvūr for Tiruccirāppaḷḷi, reached Uṟaiyūr at two o'clock in the night, and knocked at the door of Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār's house. The moment he heard my voice Ceṭṭiyār came rushing to the door, opened it, and embraced me with the words, "I've been lying in bed, thinking just of you!" That was the only occasion when he slipped into the familiar form of the pronoun "you" instead of the plural of respect *nīṅkaḷ* he otherwise used. That, and the way he had come running to the door, and the close embrace he gave me, were all signs that the river of his affection had overflowed its banks. Where true love meets true love, all forms of politeness, convention and prestige disappear completely.

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[1] He is the one who translated *Mahabharata* into Tamil, was a Tamil Pandit at Kumpakōṇam College and was a Mahāmahōpādhyāya.

"This evening Vittuvāṉ Āṟumukaccāmi[1] of Tiruvāvaṭuturai and Kirusṇaiyar were here. They showed me the book, *Cintāmaṇi*. I could only feel it with my hands, as I have gone completely blind. I found it fairly heavy. I made them open it and read it out from the beginning for me.

What wonderful work you've done! The Introduction and all other similar portions are superb! I know well how precious your book is since I had myself formerly struggled with the *Nāmakaḷ Ilampakam*. I keep wondering wherefrom you've derived such powers! How pleased, do you know, our Master would be if he were alive now! What you have achieved will earn great fame not only for yourself, but also for him, and for the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt that supported you, and for me for having secured you the job."

Ceṭṭiyār went on paying me compliments like this. We spent that whole night in the most delightful conversation. I was about to set out in the morning to deliver copies of *Cintāmaṇi* to subscribers in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi and its suburbs when Ceṭṭiyār stopped me. "I shall arrange that the copies are delivered at the proper addresses by suitable messengers. You must stay with me and talk." He then sent for a few men, and had the books delivered by them to the respective addressees.

As I was talking to him I failed to notice the passage of time. I read out for him certain passages from the *Cintāmaṇi* which were particularly enchanting. There were moments when he was moved to tears. I told him of the ordeals I had to suffer before I could identify certain words, and of the joy experienced when certain doubtful points became clear. He was listening with immense delight, unable to contain his emotion.

## A mistake

After he had been listening to me for a long time, he finally told me one thing: "You've written here about the many people who had rendered service to you. I was waiting to hear my name come up somewhere. You have not mentioned it. I am a little sad about that." It was natural, wasn't it - particularly for him - that he did express his thought! That small disenchantment with me has not diminished the affection he had for me or the respect he felt for my achievement. These were different matters. It certainly was not in his character to see, because of one single flaw, imperfection or blemish everywhere, or, because of one outstanding quality, to forget and close his eyes to other faults. He knew perfectly well how to distinguish virtue from vice. And he would speak openly of both.

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[1] He was formerly in *Tiruvāṉaikkā Mutt*. Then he became the head of Kuṉṟakkuṭi Ātīṉam.

There is some small reason why I didn't mention his name. But it is really a mistake that I didn't mention him. I saw it at that moment quite clearly. I also admitted it. "I'm guilty of an error", I said.

There is a story about Kampar: When his patron, Caṭaiyappa Vaḷḷal, came to the poet's house because of some current business, there was no place for him to sit, and so Kampar seated him in some little corner. One of the friends present exclaimed, "What? You've placed this gentleman into that miserable corner?" The great poet answered at once, "I shall place him where he belongs", and he mentioned his patron's name, with the appropriate praise and homage, in ten places in his *Rāmāyaṇam*. I then remembered this traditional story. 'A person who had been wronged must be properly compensated', I vowed to myself. Later I realized this resolve in three different ways: I have dedicated my edition of *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* to Ceṭṭiyār. For many years now I have been sending an amount of forty eight rupees in Ceṭṭiyār's name to a *Caiva* student who had taken Tamil for his B. A. at the Kumbakōṇam College. After I had settled in Madras, I have named my house there "Tiyākarāca Vilācam", in Ceṭṭiyār's permanent memory. Unfortunately, I was not lucky enough to do all this while he was still alive. To this very day I regret this mistake I had committed; I regret it more than any ill-luck that has befallen me.

I spent that day with Ceṭṭiyār and returned at night to Kumpakōṇam. I had a letter from Cēlam Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār, informing me that he had the subscriptions due in Madras, and repaid in full what I owed to Vicuvanāta Cāstiriyār in Tiruvallikkēṇi. I felt a genuine relief, as if a heavy load slipped off my head.

### Ciṉṉacāmi Piḷḷai's stanza

Friends who had received copies of *Cintāmaṇi* wrote me congratulatory letters. On Novermber 17, 1887, I got a letter from Ciṉṉacāmi Piḷḷai, the Tamil *pandit* at Christian College, with a poem which contained a skilful pun.

*paṉimatic caṭilat tiṟaikaḻalmaṟavāp pāṉmaiyōy pāruḷārēttum*
*naṉiperum pulavar kulamaṇi cāmi nātavēntāleṉaip poruḷāt*
*taṉiyuḷaṅ koṭutol kāppiya naṉṉūl tantakat tiyamitu nōkkeṉ*
*ṟiṉitaḷit taṉainiṟ kiyaṟṟumā ruḷatō eṇṇileṉ vantaṉa mallāl*

The one who does never forget
The feet of the Lord
Who resides on the snowy
Moon-like mountain,
Cāminātā! The great one!
Praised by the world
As the gem among
The world-renowned scholars!
Having a heart, specially for me,
You gave me *Tolkāppiyam* and *Naṉṉūl*
And you give me now this
Saying, Look at it, It's *akattiyam*
What more can I do, except
Paying immense homage to you.

The poem spoke of *Akattiyam* which had yielded *Tolkāppiyam* and *Nanṉūl;* however, *tol-kāppiyam* can literally be rendered 'ancient epic', and *naṉ-nūl* can be interpreted as 'good book'; finally, *akattiyam*, the name of an ancient grammer, means also 'necessity'. So the verse which read, '*Akattiyam* had yielded *Tolkāppiyam* and *Nanṉūl*-with this view, you have been generous', could also be interpreted, "Seeing the necessity, you have generously given us an excellent book, the ancient epic." I was enthusiastic reading this clever poem, and sent at once a stanza which I composed in reply. I remember only its two last lines; I have forgotten the whole text of the poem.

*Vanpuḷa pirati yutavi nī purintum*
*māṟuḷa tōveṉṟa teṉṉē*

You helped me with a copy
Why did you say
'Was it different'

## Kumāracāmi Mutaliyār's letter

At the advice of Rāmaliṅka Tēcikar I sent copies of *Cintāmaṇi* to P. Kumāracāmi Mutaliyār, and on 21-12-1887 I received a letter, and the amount due, corresponding to the price of the books. "I have often regretted the absence of the opportunity to converse with an outstanding scholar of your calibre, since I have had the pleasure to hear frequently Śrī Rāmaliṅka Tēcikar talking about you and praising you highly. I sincerely applaud your achievement of having published the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* which you have kindly sent me. I can hardly express the joy I felt when I saw the book. We are all greatly indebted to you for your efforts and for your supreme service of having rescued such precious book from its concealment in palm-leaf manuscripts, and for having made this rare treasure accessible to those who desire to know it but couldn't because they were in palm-leaf. May God help you to proceed with your efforts to rediscover, correct and publish yet many more such rare and great literary works..." This is what he wrote.

## *Vaḷaiyāpati*

When many well-wishers and friends wrote in a similar vein, I strongly felt that I should go on publishing ancient Tamil classics. Besides *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, other works are counted among the Five Great Epics: *Cilappatikāram*, *Maṇimēkalai*, *Vaḷaiyāpati* and *Kuṇṭalakēci*. Among these, I had with me the manuscript copies of *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*. *Vaḷaiyāpati* and *Kuṇṭalakēci* were not available.

During Śrī Piḷḷai's time, I happened to see the palm-leaf manuscript of *Vaḷaiyāpati* in the library of Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt. At that time, I took no interest in such ancient works. Hence I felt no inclination to study it myself, or to be taught these works. After I developed the urge to examine ancient texts, I searched through the Mutt's library, but that manuscript was not to be found. I have searched throughout Tamilnadu, but in vain. It is my nature to feel deep sorrow for the loss of so many Tamil books. But it almost broke my heart to lose something that I had seen with my own eyes! I felt similar grief, similar distress as that described by Kampar: "He suffered a burning pain at the loss of that which he had, and which was no more within his sight."

### What to publish next?

I seriously thought of taking up as my next task the research into one of those classics considered to be of the same sort as *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. With the thought that the labour of research would be lightened a little if it happened to be a work with a proper commentary, an idea occurred to me that I could publish next the *Cilappatikāram* with the commentary of Aṭiyārkkunallār.

At that time a few friends kept writing to me, making the same proposal, among them Ci. Vai. Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai and Po. Kumāracuvāmi Mutaliyār. Hence I informed a few among them that indeed I was seriously thinking of editing the *Cilappatikāram*. Just then some of my Jaina friends approached me and said, "You have done us a great service by printing the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* which had remained unpublished for such a long time. If you now decide to publish *Cūḷāmaṇi*, too, in the same way, we shall come forward and help you in all possible ways." Cantiranāta Ceṭṭiyār said, "While working on *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* you've gone to no end of trouble. You've mastered all the Jaina lore there is. So, editing *Cūḷāmaṇi* will now be no problem for you." What they were saying seemed to be very reasonable to me. I had already read through the *Cūḷāmaṇi*, and I found it to be as magnificent a *kāviyam* as *Cintāmaṇi*. So I gave it some serious thought, and jotted down a few notes concerning the text. But at this stage I learnt that Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai was preparing the *Cūḷamaṇi* for press. Hence I ceased with the efforts to print it myself. I also decided to postpone the work on *Cilappatikāram* until such time as I could gather many copies of the script and examine them, since at that moment the *Cilappatikāram* copies I had were either unsatisfactory, or the commentary portions were incomplete.

### *Pattuppāṭṭu*

I remembered how, at the very moment *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* was completed, a copy of *Pattuppāṭṭu* was placed in my hands as if at the command of divine Mother Tamil. I resolved to edit next that great classic of the *Caṅkam* age. I meditated in devotion on the Lord of Svāmimalai who is the deity of our lineage worshipped by my family, and began to study a loose copy of *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai* which I had with me.

## Chapter 103

## Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar Passes Away

When I came to the decision to edit and publish *Pattuppāṭṭu*, I had in my hands only two palmleaf copies of the work. One of them was incomplete. Although the other, given to me by Kumāracuvāmi Aiyar of Vēlūr, was complete, it was replete with errors. The basic text was in fragments, and mixed up with

Naccinārkkiniyar's commentary and other matter. From the prose order given by the commentator it was difficult to decide what was the original form of the poems. I hoped to obtain some more copies in order to compare and verify.

## Trip to Madras

At that time Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār sent me three *pirapantam* poems he had composed, *Maruntu veṇpā mālai, Tiruccir̲r̲ampala veṇpā antāti* and *Tiruvor̲r̲iyūr* pāti Tiruvārūr pāti antāti. It was at this time too that the eye-disease of Śrī Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar became much worse, and he suffered greatly. An English eye specialist called Brackman came from Madras to examine him. He advised the Chief Steward of the Mutt in private that it would be best to make necessary arrangements regarding the Mutt without delay as there was a marked decline in Tēcikar's general condition. Everyone used to call Aruṇācala Tampirāṉ, who had been sent for from Madras and was now studying at the Mutt, as the Little Prospective Head, since he had been selected the monastery's Junior Head. Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar decided to instal him in that office at once, chose an auspicious day for it, and had the invitation drafted. He ordered me to go to Madras and get that invitation printed. Because it happened to be Christmas vacation then, I agreed to do so. I also thought that I could at the same time arrange in Madras for the printing of Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār's poems, and make efforts to publish the *Pattuppāṭṭu*.

Tēcikar had chosen an auspicious day for my journey and sent me off from Tiruvāvaṭuturai. Only I felt some nameless dread deep in my heart. I was very worried at his rapid physical decline. I took leave, came back to see him, took leave of him for the second time, and went.

## The help rendered by Irācakōpālācāriyar

In Madras I stayed at Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār's bungalow, and gave both Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār's poems and the invitation to the installation of the Mutt's Junior Head to the printers. I came with my handwritten copies of *Pattuppāṭṭu* in hand. I showed the copy with the original text all mixed up to my friend Tēraḻuntūr Irācakōpālācāriyar and told him, "In this copy we don't find the basic texts by itself, but mixed in bits and pieces with the commentary. And even these bits are out of order, reduced to prose." "We could copy out these bits of the poem separately", said my friend in reply, "and then reconstruct the order with the meaning and other factors to support us." The solution he suggested offhand had not struck me till then. I placed in his hands the *Mullaippāṭṭu*. He wrote out several such parts and showed it to me. I thanked him for his advice and promised to adopt that very method. Though in later days I struggled with most difficult manuscripts and gained enough experience, his suggestion that day was most helpful to me.

My free time was spent delightfully with Cēlam Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār, I also visited Pūṇṭi Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār and informed him that I have begun to examine the text of *Pattuppāṭṭu*. He was happy to hear it.

I sent the invitation by post to Tiruvāvaṭuturai as soon as it had been printed. The printing of Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār's *pirapantam* poems was nearing completion.

## Sad news

One day at eight o'clock in the morning I was talking with friends in Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār's bungalow. A letter was placed in my hands. I looked; and sat down, stupefied, eyes overflowing with tears. It was from Poṉṉucāmi Ceṭṭiyār, the Chief Writer of Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai; he wrote, "At four o'clock in the afternoon today (7-1-1888), His Holiness has reached the abode of the Lord. The nominated person was installed as Junior Head at noon."

My heart was bursting with distress, pierced with the sharpest possible pain. When Śrī Piḷḷai, who had been my only support, passed away, and I was pining, friendless and forsaken, this great partron had held out his hand to me, taken me under his protection, and given me everything that I needed; and I was not fortunate enough to be by the side of such a person during his last moments in this ever-changing world; I felt a terrible grief. I sent at once a postcard, saying I was starting that same night. Below I added a line from Kampaṉ's *Rāmāyaṇam (Āraṇyakāṇṭam*, Caṭāyu's Lament, 21), saying, *iravalarum nallaṟamum yāṉumiṉi yeṉpaṭa nīttuc ceṉṟāyē* — Thou hast left, and forsaken thus the poor, the rightful rule, and me!

I then forgot this world. I wanted to go to Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai at once, that very minute.

Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār was very sad to hear the news. He tried to console me. He recalled one by one Tēcikar's outstanding qualities. But my grief only increased. I took leave of him, and tried to make arrangements for the journey ahead.

## Songs of mourning

I stood rooted to where I was standing; I couldn't move; I was unable to move my hand to touch the book. I felt as if my blood had frozen in my body. My heart melted as I was thinking constantly of all the encouragement he had given me, of all the good he had conferred upon me, of the joy he had felt at the honours that had been bestowed on me — like a mother happy about her child. There was absolutely no way to comfort me in my grief. I tried to compose a few stanzas. The pain in my soul was transformed into a few lines of poetry. When I realized that I could never more see him, his form I had so well imprinted in my mind seemed to stand before me.

*karuṇaiyeṉuṅ kaṭalperuku maṭaiyāya niṉatuviḻik kaṭaiyun cītat*
*taruṇamati yaṉaiyamuka maṇṭalamun teḷiyamuta tārai pōla*
*varumiṉiya moḻivākkum varuvōrkku varaiyātu vaḻaṅku kaiyum*
*tiruvaruṭcup piramaṇiya kurumaṇiyē kāṇpateṉṟu ciṟiyēṉ maṉṉō*

When shall I, small and insignificant, when shall I see your eyes, a sea of grace
with flood-gates raised; or note your face
charming like well-grown moon; or hear your gentle voice
charged full with sweetness; hands that did rejoice
and never disavowed a plea; o Subrahmanya, holy sage, great mind,
you, best of teachers, full of grace, and kind!

I remembered the advice he had given me to choose an auspicious hour when I sent out for Madras. I had felt certain then that indeed that hour was auspicious. But I realized now that that hour has proved most inauspicious!

*nalvēḷai taṉiṟceṉṉai nakarkkēkap puṟappaṭeṉa naviṉṟē yeṉṉai*
*olvēḷai taṉilviṭuttāy avvēḷai niṉaipiriya unnaṟṟum tīya*
*alvēḷai yeṉpataṉai aṟiyātu pirintutuya raṭaintē ṉantō*
*vilvēḷai veṉṟaperu viṟaluṭaiccup piramaṇiya vimala vāḻvē*

You sent me to Madras
At an appointed time
That I should start
At an auspicious moment,
Not knowing that that time
Is the time which brings
Evils beyond comprehension.
I couldn't know that and
I left and suffered.
Oh! Cuppiramaṇiya! My life!
Who by his great will power
Overcame the *Vēḷ* the Cupid with his bow.

I have composed a few similar stanzas in the *viruttam* metre, as well as a few poems in *veṇpā* and *kaṇṇi*. Two of the last-named ran like this:

*"teyvat tamiḻiṉ ceḻuñcuvaiyaip pārāṭṭum*
*caivak koḻuntiṉ capaikāṇpa tennāḷō?"*

Which day will see again such assembly of Siva's hosts
to fondle and to praise the taste of divine Tamil most?

*"iṉṟirappār vantā rilareṉ ṟiyampukuṇak*
*kuṉṟiṉmoḻi kēṭṭuvakai kūrunāḷ ennāḷō?"*

Which day will hear again the speach of Virtue's pack
That says, 'Today no beggars came to seek!'

I kept these verses to myself, and suffered in solitude. The more I thought about my loss the more unhappy I felt. I started that night and reached Tiruvāvaṭuturai along with a few others who came with me.

How could I find there what I wanted most to see? I went and saw all the places where Tēcikar used to stand or sit or teach. I imagined him there, as if indeed I could see his true form. And not finding him, I was overcome with confusion.

### New Head

The new Head, who took the name Śrī Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, adorned the Mutt as its seventeenth successive Abbot. He sought to comfort me with affectionate words. But it was beyond human power to bring me solace. At Tiruvāvaṭuturai, things went on as usually. One Head has passed on; another Head has come, though. Worship was offered at the mausoleum of one, festivities were held to celebrate the other. The whole village was dressed in gay attire.

However, in the hearts of those who had been absorbed in the unique virtues of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, there was an inconsolable ache. They dragged themsselves from one spot to another to participate in the festivities for the customs' sake only.

### *Kurupūjai*

There was the usual ceremonial worship at Tēcikar's *camāti* every day. On the concluding day there was a special and grand *pūjai*. It was attended by many monks who were followers of the Mutt, and came from far and near. From the Tirunelvēli region came hundreds of great men and scholars. I have met some of them and talked to them.

In the Tirunelvēli area lived many disciples of the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt. The two most prominent persons among them were Kavirāca Nellaiyappap Piḷḷai and Kavirāca Īcuvara Mūrttiyā Piḷḷai, both of them descendants of Ampalavāṇa Kavirāyar. The younger one, Kavirāca Īcuvara Mūrttiyā Piḷḷai, had come then to the *kurupūjai;* it was due to him that I had received from his house a manuscript copy of the text while preparing my *Cintāmaṇi* edition. When I talked to him — I was then hoping to obtain manuscripts of *Pattuppāṭṭu* — I said, "Your copy of the text of *Cintāmaṇi* was very useful. Now I plan to bring out an edition of *Pattuppāṭṭu.* If His Holiness were alive, he would certainly be happy to hear it. Unfortunately we have lost him. I need now the support of friends like you. The search for and the investigation of ancient Tamil texts is often very demanding. If I could lay my hands on some manuscripts of *Pattuppāṭṭu* I would be only very happy. I am planning to come to Tirunelvēli and have a look at the manuscripts in your house. Will you be so kind and help me obtain the permission of other scholars and poets of your region to visit their houses in my search for manuscripts?" He promised to render any assistance to me at any time I would deem to come.

### A reproof

At night of the last day of the *kurupūjai*, a large gathering was convened, and in the presence of Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, the new Head, many spoke, reciting the stanzas they had composed, commemorating Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and felicitating the new Abbot. I did not attend that gathering.

A disciple of the Mutt by name of Paḻaṉik Kumārat Tampirāṉ read out the stanzas of the elegy he had composed. While reciting he came to the lines,

*kurumaṇi Cuppiramaṇiya kulamaṇi*
*Vāvaṭuturaippāṟ koḻittuk koṇṭa*
*orumaṇi Cintāmaṇiyai yutavumaṇi.*

"That gem of all Teachers, Cuppiramaṇiya who flourished at this jewel of monasteries, Tiruvāvaṭuturai, brought to light that other jewel, the gem of gems, *Cintāmaṇi.*"

He is reported to have added in explanation, "I have remembered in these lines the precious part played by His Holiness in the publication of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, for it was he who encouraged Cāminātaīyar, who had studied Tamil at this Mutt and is at present a member of the College staff at Kumpakōṇam, and helped him by giving him copies of this work, and also in other ways." One among the audience is said to have proclaimed then, "It is wrong to give prominence to a Jaina work in this place, as it is a Caiva monastry! It is wrong that Cāminātaiyar, who is closely associated with this mutt, has edited and published a Jaina work which had been characterized by Umāpati Civācāriyar as '*Cintāmaṇi*, a tissue of lies'! It is our duty to condemn it and prevent any further circulation of that book!" He was a person who had come from elsewhere and had stopped at the Mutt for a short time. I knew him, too.

The monks and others, hearing such words, were quite shocked. They were also angry with the man. They opposed him at once, bringing in suitable arguments, and managed to silence him. My friend *Pulikkuṭṭi* 'Little Tiger' Irāmaliṅkat Tampirāṉ composed about him a few critical, or rather satirical and abusive stanzas, gave them to the boys in the school, and told them to spread them so that they would fall on his ears.

Hearing all this I felt very sorry. My friends said, "There are in this world always some envious persons who would make it their job to spread calumny and abuse. Even an insignificant cause is enough for them to take hold of and start. One should simply ignore it. Those who know the real worth of your work and hold you in high esteem won't even listen to such slanders."

The *kurupūjai* was over. Visitors from other places returned to their homes. I took up the study of *Pattuppāṭṭu* to occupy my mind, which was constantly returning in loving memory to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar.

## Chapter 104

## A trip to Tirunelvēli

Before the grief caused by the loss of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar could be soothed, I had to endure another great blow in the beginning of the same year 1888. Śrī Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār, who could be counted next to Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar among my great benefactors, was gathered to the feet of the Lord.

### Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār's passing away

I used to get frequent letters from Ceṭṭiyār. They were written for him by others ever since his eye-sight diminished. I understood from those letters that Ceṭṭiyār's body has become very feeble. But I did not expect that he would pass away so soon.

Ceṭṭiyār reached the holy feet of Lord Śiva on nineteenth of January 1888, and I heard about it the very next day. I regretted I had not gone and seen him. The news, coming to me just when I had started researching and editing of *Pattuppāṭṭu*, upset me somewhat. And the condition of the palm-leaf script was as bad as the state of my mind.

*maṭiyeṉṟun tavirtiyaṟi viṉaivaḷarkkum nūlkaḷmika makiḻntē mellap*
*paṭiyeṉṟun cuvaiyoḻukap pāṭeṉṟu meṉakkaṉpiṟ pakarvōr yārē*
*miṭiyeṉṟu meṉaiyakalac ceyuntiyka rācaṉeṉum mēṉmai yōṉē*
*tuṭiyeṉṟu morukarattā ṉaṭiyeṉṟu maṟavāta tūymai yōṉē*

The great Tiyākarācaṉ!
Who drove away poverty
For ever from me
The pure one
Who never forgets the one
With a drum in his hand!
Who is going to advise me,
Kindly like you,
Give up laziness for ever
Read gladly and slowly
Books that improves your knowledge
And always sing sweetly

I composed a few stanzas as elegies moaning on Ceṭṭiyār's passing away. Those who studied under Ceṭṭiyar and knew well his greatness were deeply grieved. Many of them wrote to me, expressing their sadness. Capāpati Piḷḷai, the Tamil pandit at Coimbatore College, who had been Ceṭṭiyār's student, composed a number of elegies. In one of them he has also remembered me.

*poyyaṭaiyāta cirāmalait tiyāka puravalaṉcīr*
*meyyaṭai nāvalar muṉpuvi nāṭṭi virumpemaraip*
*paiyaṭai kākkuṭan taiccāmi nātaiyaṉ pakkalilē*
*kaiyyaṭai yākki yakaṉṟā ṉitunalla kāriyamē*

The unfailing patron Tiyākarācaṉ
of Cirāmalai
Established himself
Before true scholars.
He left this world;
Leaving us who love him,
In the hands of Cāminātaiyar
Of Kuṭantai
Of green groves.
It is good he did it.

Although I deeply regretted the passing away of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar and Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār, it did not stop me from my research into the *Pattuppāṭṭu*. I rather tried to forget my grief by means of that research. I was convinced that I could arrive at the correct version if only I had more manuscripts at my disposal. I also thought of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar — if only he would be around, he would arrange for many copies of the text to be sent from Tirunelvēli region. And again, I remembered Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār, how happy he would be to hear me report to him that I had found some good copies.

## I set out

While I was engaged in the work on *Pattuppāṭṭu*, I was often so fed up that I thought I would give up the task altogether; this was whenever I was confused of being unable to make out the sense, the meaning, the wording of the text. But the very next moment, when something rare and interesting caught anew my eye, although such things came quite rarely, I thought that for the sake of these one could toil and labour an entire life-time.

Instead of suffering frustration with manuscripts without any basic text in them, or such that contained innumerable mistakes, I decided that I had better go in search of a few clean manuscripts which I could collect and use in my studies, and hence I started in the month of May for the region of Tirunelvēli.

I informed Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, the Head of Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt, and took leave of him. With great affection towards me, he at once informed Śrī Cāminātat Tampirāṉ of Īcāṉamaṭam of Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt at Tirunelvēli, of my coming, and ordered him to be of assistance to me and take a good care of me. I had also written a letter to Kavirāja Īcuvara Mūrttiya Piḷḷai, to inform him well in advance of my coming, as I have told him previously in person.

I started on an auspicious day for Tirunelvēli and on reaching the town made the Icāṉa Mutt the place of my residence. The *tampirāṉ* there looked after all my needs. Then I went to see Kavirāja Īcuvara Mūrttiyā Piḷḷai. He and his elder brother were already expecting me. I talked to them for a while. Some other gentlemen were also present. We talked mostly about the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt, about the virtues of Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, the poetic genius of Śrī Piḷḷai, and about Tamil literature.

## A temple of Tamil

Both brothers were rather rich men. Even more than with their wealth they could boast about their lovely characters. The house of the elder one, Kavirāja Nellaiyappa Piḷḷai, was situated in New South Street. Canals were flowing both back and front of the house. Running water was there always. Behind the house spread a large garden with a pleasant garden-house. He was very generous and had great influence. Many wealthy gentlemen and scholars and poets came at all hours to visit him. Deep devotion to Śiva joined hands, in that family which was blessed abundantly by the Goddess of Good Fortune, with the love of Tamil learning.

Śrī Nellaiyappa Piḷḷai had a large private shrine constructed in his house. He grew a *vilva* tree and worshipped it daily.

Next morning I began rummaging in the house of both brothers searching for manuscript copies. In the house of Kavirāja Icuvara Mūrttiya Piḷḷai, in the West Street, was a big library. That place was their ancestral home. They opened the room in which they kept their palm-leaf manuscripts. I looked and I was thrilled to the utmost.I thought,amazed, 'Was this the way in which people used to keep palm-leaf scripts in the Tamil *Caṅkam* in ancient days?' The palm-leaf manuscripts were arranged in neat rows. Each was properly and beautifully tied. There was no dust; no insects; the palm-leaves remained separate, they did not stick together. In short, the place was a veritable temple of Goddess Tamil.

I searched among the palmleaf copies there, and found out that they were books of all possible sorts. Many were manuscripts of books already printed. First I felt a tremendous urge to go through all of them at one swoop.

## Full of anxiety

I confined first of all my search to copies of *Pattuppāṭṭu*. There indeed was one copy. It has only four idylls beginning with *Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai*, and even in that I could not find the text by itself. A great anxiety got hold of me: Even in such magnificent place like this, there is no complete manuscript of *Pattuppāṭṭu!* Where else is it likely to be found?

"What do you think?" asked Nellaiyappa Kavirāyar.

"Oh, it's nothing", I replied, but I was very worried. "I had first expected to find the entire wealth of Tamil poetry in this place that looks like the residence of a poet of the *Caṅkam* Age. I have not been able to find in full the one object of my search. Where else in the entire Tamil world can there be a place better than this Tamil shrine! Where can I find what I haven't found here! The Tamil-speaking world has treated with neglect and indifference the literary heritage of works created by the great poets of the *Caṅkam* Age!"

"You must not think that this is the only house of this type here", answered Kavirāyar. "There are around here several more houses with palm-leaf books of various kind. You may go and look there, too. At Śrī Vaikuṇṭam and the other villages in this region there are houses of a large scholarly community. You can see there thousands of palmleaf scripts! Therefore you have no reason to be discouraged." It seemed to me that it was the Goddess of Tamil herself enshrined in that house that was assuring me of success, and I continued my search with determination.

## *Koṅkuvēḷ Mākkatai*

I came then upon an old palmleaf manuscript, with a slip attached to it which said, "*Koṅkuvēḷ Mākkatai*". At that time I had no idea what kind of work it was. However, I came across that name in the commentary to *Ilakkaṇakkottu*. Śrī Cāmināta Tēcikar, the author of that treatise, writes, in a passage where he complains that some people waste their time on a number of worthless works instead of reading 'good works': "Let your association be with *Tiruvaikkōvai;* it tells us, through the wisdom of Māṇikkavācakar: Śiva alone is the supreme Truth. Moreover, the Lord Aḻakiya Tirucciṟṟampalam Uṭaiyār, captivated totally by his utterances, took it down in writing by his holy hand. Ignoring its excellence they merge into and associate with works like *Cintāmaṇi*, *Cilappatikāram*, *Maṇimēkalai*, *Caṅkam* Poetry and *Kōnkuvēḷ Mākkatai* and they spend their days'unprofitably and ruin their lives by thinking highly of such writings as *Pattuppāṭṭu*, *Eṭṭuttokai*, *Patiṉeṇkīḻkkaṇakku*, the stories of Rāmaṉ, of Naḷaṉ, of Ariscantiraṉ..." I remembered this passage then, in which that staunch Śaivite rejects with hatred *Koṅkuvēḷ Mākkatai* along with the other books. I guessed that it could be the story of a chieftain by name of Koṅkuvēḷ, and I took that manuscript and kept it for later investigation. There was also a copy there of *Eṭṭuttokai* containing, except *Kalittokai* and *Paripāṭal*, the remaining six anthologies. With Kavirāyar's permission I took away that and a few other books. Two days we were in that house in the search for palmleaf scripts. Then one morning they took me to the houses of their relatives and friends to continue my search for ancient manuscripts elsewhere.

First we went and looked in the house of their relative, Makāvittvāṉ Cālivāṭīcuvara Ōtuvār. Then we went to search in a few other places. There were in all those houses many palmleaf scripts and printed books, but none of them was a poetic work of the *Caṅkam* Age.

### *Takaṭūr Yāttirai*

We then went to the house of Kriṣṇa Vāttiyār in South New Street. There, in a palmleaf script of the commentary on *Tolkāppiyam*, I found a note saying, "I borrowed this copy from a person living in Nāṅkuṉēri, giving him in exchange my copy of *Takaṭūr Yāttirai*." From whom this was borrowed was not said there. The name, *Takaṭūr Yāttirai*, occurs in the commentary on *Tolkāppiyam*. Thus I knew that it was an ancient work. As soon as I learnt that the book could be at Nāṅkuṉēri, I thought I could find it somehow, and so I asked my friends without further delay, "Are there houses of scholars living in Nāṅkuṉēri?"

"There are", they answered. "Most of them being Vaiṣṇavas, they have Vaiṣṇava literature." I asked, "In this script it says that *Takaṭūr Yāttirai* has been lent to someone in Nāṅkuṉēri. If I go and search there, am I likely to get it?"

"You may. But of course we cannot say for certain. Who would read books like that nowadays? You have not been able yet to find a complete version of *Pattuppāṭṭu* which you've been searching for, have you? Like that, that book too might have vanished. However, it stands to reason that, just as we find this copy of *Tolkāppiyam* here, *Takaṭūr Yāttirai*, having been exchanged for it, could be available there."

I said, "It would be good to find it!" But when I searched later at Nāṅkuṉēri for manuscripts four times, I could never set eyes on *Takaṭūr Yāttirai*. Like so many ancient works that have left this earth and gone on pilgrimage, that precious work, too, I think, has gone and disappeared.

## Chapter 105

## Excellent copies of *Pattuppāṭṭu*

### In other houses

I was losing heart at my failure to find the object of my search in spite of looking for it in many houses, and I asked Kavirāya Nellaiyappa Piḷḷai, "Are there any other places where I may continue my search?"

"God Nellaiyappar alone should grant your wish and remedy the failure of your having not found your manuscript. I can think of nothing else. There is one house left. If the text is not to be had there, then we may safely conclude that it cannot be found anywhere in this town."

### Tiruppāṟkaṭaṉātaṉ Kavirāyar

"Whose house is that?" I asked eagerly.

"Here at Vaṇṇārpēṭṭai there once lived a person by name Tiruppāṟkaṭaṉātaṉ Kavirāyar. He was one of the foremost disciples of an ancestor of ours called Ampalavāṇa Kavirāyar who was a very great scholar. There are manuscripts in plenty in his house. We'll go and look there. His grandson, who bears his name, lives there now", he said.

"Let's go there at once", I said hurrying him up.

"Come along then, let's go", he answered and took me to that house. As soon as we arrived, Tiruppāṟkaṭaṉātaṉ Kavirāyar, who was at home, welcomed us warmly. He seemed to me to be an impeccable gentleman. Kavirāya Nellaiyappa Piḷḷai first paid him many fine compliments, then, introducing me, informed him that I had come in search of copies of *Caṅkam* works like the *Pattuppāṭṭu*. He said at once, "Is that so? I should have known earlier! Only yesterday Sub-Judge Mr. Kaṉakacapai Mutaliyār took away for a friend of his all three, *Eṭṭuttokai*, *Pattuppāṭṭu* and *Patiṉeṇkīḻkkaṇakku*. They were clear copies. I would have given them to this gentleman instead, if he had come earlier." I much regretted I had not gone to him a few days before. But it struck me that a house which had such three excellent works in stock could have other equally valuable books, and so I asked whether I might see other palmleaf manuscripts stored there. As it was then eight o'clock in the night Tiruppāṟkaṭaṉātaṉ Kavirāyar told me that I could come next morning. So, next day, I went there again, with Nellaiyappakkavirāyar. Another friend came along, Aṉanta Kiruṣṇa Kavirāyar, the professor of Tamil at Tirunelvēli Hindu College. Tiruppāṟkaṭaṉātan Kavirāyar took out and placed for our view all palmleaf books that he had in his house. There could have been about five hundred palmleaf manuscripts. Three quarters of them were works composed by his grandfather. All three of us began carefully our scrutiny. I took one set of palmleaves. Aṉanta Kiruṣṇa Kavirāyar took another, a large one.

When I asked Aṉanta Kiruṣṇa Kavirāyar what was the title of that palmleaf book he had taken up, he answered, *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai*. That had put some heart into me. He turned over some more palmleaves and said, *Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai*. My heart overflowed with gratitude to God Paramēcuvaraṉ, for this could in fact turn out to be the *Pattuppāṭṭu*. The tears in my eyes prevented me from seeing clearly. I asked Kavirayar to look at the palm leaves one by one. The whole *Pattuppāṭṭu* was there, all ten poems, in due order, with their commentaries. It was a very old manuscript. I felt a limitless joy and great enthusiasm. At the end of the palm leaf script it was written, "I had given a *Tolkāppiyam* manuscript to Kavirāyar of Śrī Vaikuṇṭam, and took this in the year of the Kollam era..." Calculating the years it looked to me that this note would have been written a hundred and fifty years ago, and the text would have been written some two hundred years earlier.[1] We paused for a while, resumed our search, and discovered *Cintāmaṇi*, *Koṅkuvēḷ Mākkatai*, and a few *Pirapantams*. The *Koṅkuvēḷ Mākkatai* was a copy of the one I had seen before. It had no beginning and no end. It was then twelve noon. I returned to my lodging, with all the copies I had selected, after having thanked their owner from all my heart. I was in a very happy frame of mind, for I had finally secured a copy of the whole of *Pattuppāṭṭu*.

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[1] I don't remember the name and the year.

### *Irāmaṉ katai* and other works

Realizing that even in the manuscript of *Pattuppāṭṭu* found at Tiruppāṟkaṭaṉātaṉ Kavirāyar's house, the verses of *Pattuppāṭṭu* are not alone, I asked my friends if there were in Tirunelvēli other houses in which I could still search. They told me that there were apparently many manuscripts in the house of a certain Campirati Tiruppāṟkaṭaṉāta Piḷḷai, who used to be in olden times a public head accountant. I went and looked. But they were all manuscripts of later literary works. The poets and the scholars have preserved ancient Tamil classics well. Landlords and noblemen, however, have apparently collected only those books which they would enjoy reading themselves. Among the manuscripts of works which I found there were *Irāmaṉ katai* (that is, the *Rāmāyaṇam* of Kampar), *Ariccantiraṉ katai* (which designated the *Ariccantirappurāṇam)* and *Naḷaṉ katai* (that is, the *Naiṭatam)*. I also saw names of other books quoted like this. Then I remembered that the author of *Ilakkaṇakkottu*, Cāmināta Tēcikar, had mentioned books like *The Story (katai) of Rāmaṉ, The Story of Hariccantiraṉ* and *The Story of Naḷaṉ,* and I guessed that this was the custom how they designated narrative literary works in Teṉpāṇṭināṭu.

### Mayilēṟum Perumāḷ Piḷḷai

I then remembered a *vittuvāṉ* called Mayilēṟum Perumāḷ Piḷḷai, the teacher of Cāmināta Tēcikar, who praised him lavishly.

Tēcikar, who was an ascetic and a recluse, writes in praise,

*Tirunelvēli yeṉuñciva purattiṉ tāṇṭava*
*mūrtti tantacen tamiḻkkaṭal, vāḻmayi,*
*lēṟum perumāḷ makipati*

"Mayilēṟum Perumāḷ rules supreme
in the Ocean of High Tamil, created by Tāṇṭavamūrtti,
in Civaṉ's town, Tirunelvēli..."

That particular scholar composed a commentary on *Kallāṭam.* At the time when the *Caṅkam* classics were as unknown in Tamilnadu as were Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's commentaries and other works of that kind, *Kallāṭam* and Mayilēṟum Perumāḷ Piḷḷai's gloss on it were very important and greatly esteemed. I felt a strong urge to go and search in his house for manuscripts since, after all, that great scholar had lived there in Tirunelvēli.

I asked Nellaiyappakkavirāyar, "Any descendants of Mayilēṟum Perumāḷ Piḷḷai around here?"

"There is a Mayilēṟum Perumāḷ Piḷḷai who is in fact a member of the same lineage. He's a completely worldly-minded fellow. He doesn't care a damn about Tamil. But I'll show you", he answered, and sent at once for that man.

He came. Nellaiyappakkavirāyar introduced me and said, "This gentleman has come here searching for palmleaf manuscripts. Since you are descended from great scholars, he would like to look in your house." The man answered, "I don't deny that I come from a line of great scholars. My father was still quite a learned man. But he has not transferred the knowledge of Tamil grammar and literature onto me. I learnt English instead. Now I've got a good job as a clerk with a lawyer. I may know something of law. There's plenty of legal books in my house! As for old palmleaf scripts, I have given them all away to those who were interested. Why should they take up space in our house? Now there's not even one single left. The one I have in my hands is case bundle."

"Please don't say so", I tried to intervene. "There may still be one or two. Let us have a look."

"Well, I do keep my house clean and in order. Where could they be hidden without me knowing about it? I don't forbid you to come to our house. Come and be my guest. I'll offer you even some betel. But don't start again about manuscripts, please! If I would have some I would give them to you, wouldn't I ?" And he made ready to go. As I opened my mouth and tried still to say something he interrupted me saying, "Sorry. I've things to do. Farewell and good-bye, sir." And he left.

I was quite sad. What a difference between his ancestor Mayilēṟum Perumāḷ Piḷḷai who had composed the commentary on *Kallāṭam* and this man! That his lineage has come to this!

## Help rendered by Nellaiyappak Kavirāyar

I stayed then for two more days in Tirunelvēli, saw a few more houses, and took leave from Nellaiyappak Kavirāyar, his younger brother, and the other friends, and was about to leave for Kumpākōṇam. My heart was overflowing with gratitude for the affection of Nellaiyappak Kavirāyar who had been helpful in so many ways. How could I ever repay him? On the verge of my departure I composed the following *veṇpā* stanza:

*Caṅkat tamiḻait taḷarviṉṟi yāṉpeṟavē*
*aṅkaṅ kuṭaṉvaṇ taḷittiṭṭōṉ-poṅkupukaḻ*
*iṉpōṭu mīcaṉaṭi yeṇṇunellai yappaṉaippōl*
*aṉpōṭutavi ceyvā rār*

"He's been tireless in taking me here and there
so that I could go and search everywhere
in my quest for the Caṅkattamiḻ.
Who ever will help me with love so sweet
as Nellaiyappak Kavirāyar who's ever at the Lord's Feet,
always devoted, famous, friendly, and never cold!"

## Disappointed again

After having returned to Kumpakōṇam I reported in detail on my trip to Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar. I then used the Vaṇṇārpēṭṭai manuscript collating it with others I had with me. A few parts were missing of the commentary even in that copy. When I was in Tirunelvēli I was told that there lived many scholars' families at Āḻvār Tirunakari. I could not resist the temptation then to go there and look. There was a College retreat of a few days following Āvaṇi Aviṭṭam. I decided to go during that time, and I wrote about it to a few friends in that area, to the Great Steward of Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt at Javantipuram, Paṉṉirukait Tamipirāṉ, and to Civarāma Aiyar who was the Inspector of schools there.

### Kaṉakacapai Mutaliyār

During the time when I published *Cīvdkacintāmaṇi* I made acquaintance with the then Sub-Judge of Tirunelvēli, Kaṉakacapai Mutaliyār; he was of help to me in those days; he lived then in Tañcavūr; a man of splendid character, and great affection for Tamil.

After he had gone to Tirunelvēli he wrote a letter to me and also sent me a message through a gentleman who had come from there; it was in writing and it said, "I have come to this town. There are many places here where one finds residing Tamil scholars. They may have palmleaf manuscripts. If you would need them for your research I would do everything to assist you." When I made my first trip to Tirunelvēli I did not see him because he had gone out of town. Hence I wrote him a letter as soon as I have decided to go for the second time.

All my friends who had received my letter answered positively. Kaṉakacapai Mutaliyār alone has not answered. I decided to find out whether he had left town again.

As soon as the retreat of Āvaṇi Aviṭṭam began I set out from Kumpakōṇam and next morning arrived in Tirunelvēli. I went to see Kaṉakacapai Mutaliyār as the very first. He was however very different from what I expected him to be. He said very decidedly, "I've promised to be of help in the search for manuscripts to someone else. Therefore, to my regret, I cannot do anything for you in this matter."

### Āḻvār Tirunakari

Subsequently I went to see my friend Śrīmāṉ A. Kiruṣṇacāmi Aiyar, a lawyer at Kailācapuram, and explained to him the reason of my coming. He assured me that I had nothing to fear, and wrote immediately a letter for E. Cuppaiyā Mutaliyār, a lawyer at Śrī Vaikuṇṭam. With this letter in hand I departed for Śrī Vaikuṇṭam. Mr. Mutaliyār accompanied me very kindly to Āḻvār Tirunakari. On the way we stopped at Veḷḷūr and I searched in the houses of a few scholars there. I have not come across the *Pattuppāṭṭu* at all. At Āḻvār Tirunakari I went to see my friends. They kept everything ready so that I could search for the scripts in their houses easily. I went first to the house of a Lakṣmaṇa Kavirāyar, who was the descendant of a famous scholar by name of Tīrātaviṉai Tīrtta Tirumēṉi Kavirāyar. There were thousands of manuscripts in his house! Although I spent three whole days there searching, I have not found a copy of the *Pattuppāṭṭu* there. Then I searched in the shelves of many other scholars. I have not found it anywhere. Dejection overtook me. Lakṣmaṇa Kavirāyar, seeing the state of mind I was in, said, "I forgot one thing. My father-in-law lives in this place, too. My servant gave a few manuscripts which had belonged to this house to him. May be the book you're searching for is with him. Shall we go and look?" I asked him to indeed try his best and find out somehow if it could be done. It was a day of festival in the local temple. That night the images of Lord Perumāḷ and of Caṭakōpāḻvār were being taken out in procession through the street I was staying in. So I had a look at the blessed figure of Nammāḻvār and sent out a fervent prayer to him to fulfil for me the mission I had come for.

I then went with my friends and sat on the porch of the house where I used to take my meals. The moon was shining bright. Just then Lakṣmaṇa Kavirāyar came hurrying up to where we were and placed in my hands a manuscript with the following words, "Look at this book! This is the only one my father-in-law has with him. I have promised to return it as soon as I have looked at it." Eagerly and in haste I untied the script and looked at it in the moonlight. Suddenly my eyes caught the title,[1] *Mullaippāṭṭu*. There was no limit to the joy I felt then. Rapidly I turned the leaves over and over, reading. Seven poems were there, beginning with *Tirumurukāṟṟupaṭai*, in perfect order. I told the friends who were around that I had not prayed to the Āḻvār in vain. The excitement kept me awake all night. Next day I received from Lakṣmaṇa Kavirāyar that particular manuscript as well as *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, *Patiṟṟuppattu* and *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*, took leave of my friends, stopped over at Tirunelvēli to meet certain people there, and returned to Kumpakōṇam.

# Chapter 106

## Good Omen

### The house of Veḷḷūr Kavirāyar

During my trip to Āḻvār Tirunakari, I was rummaging through palmleaf scripts in the house of famous Kavirāyar living in the village of Veḷḷūr; and suddenly I saw the name *Irāmāvatāram* written on a copy of Kampar's *Rāmāyaṇam*. In the text of the *Kamparāmāyaṇam* itself, the name of the book is given as *Irāmāvatāram* 'The Rāma-Incarnation':

*naṭaiyi ṉiṉṟuyar nāyakaṉ tōṟṟattiṉ*
*iṭaini kaḻnta irāmāva tārap pōrt*
*toṭaini rampiya tōmaṟu mākkatai*

"... the faultless great story replete with verses
by name of *Irāmāvatāram*...
about the appearance of the Highest Hero...."

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[1] The difficulties and my disappointments this time in search of palmleaf manuscripts, I have described in detail in my article *Nilavil malarnta mullai*, published in *kalaimakaḷ* It was also included in the second part of my book *Nalluraikkōvai*. Hence they are given in brief here.

So it occurred to me that indeed the current name of the great poem might have been *Irāmāvatāram*. When I later researched an anthology of poems, the *Puṟattiraṭṭu*, I discovered that the name *Irāmāvatāram* was subscribed under the stanzas of Kampar's *Rāmāyaṇam*, and this has convinced me that I was right in my assumption.

Nobody knew at that time who was the author of the commentary on *Tirucciṟṟampalakkōvai*. There were many who ascribed the commentary to Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar. I too was of that opinion. In the first edition of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* when I wrote the biography of Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar I included the commentary on *Tirukkōvaiyār* among the works of Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar. In a manuscript of that book discovered in the house of Veḷḷūr Kavirāyar, I saw a note saying that the commentary was the work of Pērāciriyar. I have changed my opinion about Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's authorship of the commentary on *Tirukkōvaiyār*. My revised conclusion was supported by the study of the commentary on *Pirayōkavivēkam*.

As the master of the house fell ill during my visit there, I could not take any book with me, and I had to return to Kumpakōṇam.

I gathered all the various copies of *Pattuppāṭṭu* which I could obtain and began to study them. In some of them, some of the poems were missing. Some manuscripts had leaves missing here and there. Some were replete with errors. Not one among the manuscripts gave the continuous and full text of the original poems alone. I was plunged in a misery of worry where I was going to obtain a clean and correct copy.

## The copy of Vīrapāṇṭiyak Kavirāyar

During one of my regular visits to Tiruvāvaṭuturai, I described in detail to Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, the Head of the Mutt, my journey to different places in search of *Pattuppāṭṭu*, and I added, "Inspite of all these efforts I have not been able to secure a correct copy. It would be of great advantage if instructions could be issued to officials of the Mutt elsewhere to be on the look-out wherever they are posted, and, if a copy should be found, to send it." Tēcikar noted how worried I was, and encouraged me: "Please don't worry! There are a number of places joined to the Mutt. We shall write to all of them, and see to it that somehow we get you a proper copy of the *Pattuppāṭṭu*."

"I'd be happy if you would", I said and took leave.

Two weeks later I got a letter from Tiruvāvaṭuturai. It was from the Chief Writer Poṉṉucāmi Ceṭṭiyār and it said, "The Mutt's officials in the Southern regions have been alerted by His Holiness; there is every hope of a favourable outcome; to worry is useless." The next week I went to Tiruvāvaṭuturai to ask for the latest news. I entered the monastery and was about to set foot in the state room when the orders of the Mutt's Head fell on my ears : "Poṉṉucāmi Ceṭṭiyār! Bring the *Pattuppāṭṭu* and hand it over to Śrī Aiyar!" I was thrilled hearing these words. I hurried to where the Head of the Mutt was, and seated myself next to him. Poṉṉucāmi Ceṭṭiyār brought the script at once and placed it in my hands. I opened it, and I saw: all the ten poems were there, text and commentary run on together. I was beside myself with joy — the whole of *Pattuppāṭṭu* at last! I went scrutinizing every part of it. At the turning of each leaf my heart thumped with delight. It was written on one of the leaves that the manuscript was produced by Kumāracāmip Piḷḷai, Tamil pandit in Caldwell College, Tūttukkuṭi, from the copy of Vīrapāṇṭiyak Kavirāyar.

"Wherefrom was this copy obtained?" I asked in surprise the Mutt's Head.

"At our Tiruccentūr Mutt there is an official by name of Vīrapāku Piḷḷai. A very capable person. He's got it for us and sent it." I returned to Kumpakōṇam and compared this script with my personal copy. There were many errors corrected. I still was convinced that I did not have the genuine original, but I was satisfied that at least I have got a relatively correct and complete copy of the *Pattupāṭṭu*, and set about getting it ready for press.

## A gap in Kuṟiñci

Meanwhile, I ran into another difficulty. In one particular spot of the *Kuṟiñcippāṭṭu* I came upon a gap. This blank space was in all manuscripts I had with me. It was not easy to determine how many lines had been left out. When looking on the subject-matter it was apparent that it could have been only a short part of the text. That particular passage was a catalogue of flowers, with the names of many of them in due order on either side. So only the names of a few flowers must have been left out in the middle. The happiness in obtaining the manuscript of Virapāṇṭiyak Kavirāyar was a little bit reduced because of this missing part.

I have experienced hindrances and problems since I had begun, and now, worried and dejected, I did not know what to do. Nothing occurred to me. Then I remembered the Tarumapuram monastery, a śaivite Mutt as ancient and illustrious as that at Tiruvāvaṭuturai. So far I have had no opportunity to search *there* for manuscripts. But at first I hesitated because some people might regard my going there unfavourably, since there was some misunderstanding between the two Mutts.

However, I felt a strong desire to go there and a hope that I might find a *Pattuppāṭṭu* version there, since the Tarumapuram Mutt had been adorned by many great scholars. With the thought that if I would scrupulously observe, while engaged in my reasearch into Tamil texts, all the various rules of tradition and lineages, the task I had set before myself would never be fulfilled, I went to the Head of the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt and expressed openly my desire to go and search for manuscripts at Tarumapuram. Ampalavāvaṇa Tēcikar gave his consent, and even sent me in a cart and Poṉṉucāmi Ceṭṭiyār to accompany me.

## The gap is filled[1]

I was lucky. I went to the monastery of Tarumapuram, saw its Head, Śrī Māṇikkavācaka Tēcikar, and with his permission started my search among the scripts kept there. I found what I had come to seek. I came across a few stray leaves of *Pattuppāṭṭu*. The list of flowers in the *Kuṟiñcippāṭṭu* was there, complete. I came to know that the missing number of flowers were only four. I expressed my gratitude with the joy at having filled the gap, received those palmleaves, and returned to Kumpakōṇam. I saw many texts at Tarumapuram. There was for instance a copy of Oṭṭakkūttar's *Takkayākapparaṇi* with commentary. As I was then not interested in it. I left that manuscript untouched.

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[1] In my article *Utirnta Malarkaḷ* published in *Kalaimakaḷ*, one can see the details. *(Nalluraikōvai — IV)*

There was still a void which had remained unfilled: I did not have the full text of *Pattuppāṭṭu* in its original form. I knew that there was a copy of *Pattuppāṭṭu* in the Government Manuscripts Library in Madras. I asked them to lend me a copy of it. When it came I found the original text alone only for two poems out of ten. I decided that it was of no more use to worry and wait for more copies of the bare text to appear, and I began to prepare the book for press.

Tirumāṉūrk Kiruṣṇaiyar was with me and was of much help. There were others too, comparing various versions and helping me in their own friendly ways with the editorial work on *Pattuppāṭṭu*, such as my student Śrī Cokkaliṅkat Tampirāṉ and Śrī Ma. Vī. Irāmānujācāriyar.

## Another edition

When I was searching for manuscripts in the Tirunelvēli region I, from time to time, reported about my activities, through the daily *Cutēcamittiraṉ*. A Tamil scholar by name of Ti. Ta. Kaṉakacuntaram Piḷḷai who was employed in the office of the Director of the Department of Education, Madras, read them and wrote to me on 18-9-1888. His letter said, "... Since some time I have been searching for scripts of *Pattuppāṭṭu*, and am engaged in editing after correcting errors. Let *you* be the one who will publish in print the *Eṭṭuttokai*. We shall publish the *Pattuppāṭṭu* as best as we can." I wrote back as soon as I read his letter, telling him that I was making arrangements for having the *Pattuppāṭṭu* printed. In a reply , dated 30-9-88, he wrote: "I am sorry to say that I have to be engaged in precisely the same work as you. I have heard that thus far you have been preparing an edition of *Cilappatikāram*. You must not think that I am against you. I too am going to finish my edition of *Pattuppāṭṭu!*"

I wrote back, "Do publish it in your own way. I shall have it published in mine. There is enough place in Tamilnadu for two books, and enough readers to read them." And I proceeded with my research in *Pattuppāṭṭu*.

## Milk *kāvaṭi*

I gave the whole text one final reading and arranged the sheets so that they could go to the printer. Tirumāṉūrk Kiruṣṇaiyar helped me to write them all out sitting with me. I first revised all the other poems before reading finally the *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai*. I had the text and the commentary of that poem written out separately, as was necessary. One day at nine o'clock in the morning *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai* was ready. I felt a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. That moment there was heard in the street the sound of *nākacuram*. We looked out. A devotee of god Cuppiramaṇiyam who belonged to the Nāyuṭu community, having bathed in the Kāviri and smeared his body all over with sacred ashes, was coming along the street carrying a milk *kāvaṭi*. His whole body stuck with miniature javelins, he was swaying rhythmically to the tune of a few songs he sang in praise of Murukaṉ. The piper accompanied him, suiting the music of his *nākacuram* to his song and dance.

That devotee of Murukaṉ with his *kāvaṭi* reached my door and stopped there at the exact moment when the copying of *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai* had been finished. That sight was a balm to my mind, afflicted with obstacles of so many kinds. Overcome with emotion I said to Kiruṣṇaiyar, "We've completed the *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai*. Now we see this scene — a sign that the Lord's divine grace will help us finish our job."

He agreed: "Yes, it is indeed a good omen."

# Chapter 107

# A Storm of Criticism

The printed *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* received the warmest welcome from the people of Tamilnadu. Scholars, who had learned from it many new facts, praised me highly and urged me to accomplish the edition of *Pattuppāṭṭu* as soon as possible. Those who saw *Puṟanāṉūṟu* and other ancient texts mentioned by name in the Introduction and Footnotes to the *Cintāmaṇi* encouraged me by their request that I publish all these one after the other.

### A few mischievous people

While thus the support of admirers was growing on all sides on the one hand, poisonous mischief of a few envious men began to raise its head on the other. There are a few who derive pleasure from running down others, and these now came forward to attack, in speech and writing and print, my edition of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. Among the mistakes they pointed out there indeed were a few real slips and errors. However, their aim was not to rectify these defects; rather, it was to criticize at any cost, and to destroy my reputation. The manner and the tone of their criticism revealed not only that their hearts were burning with envy, but it also showed that they had no love for Tamil whatsoever. In this world of ours there are always people of that sort.

### Errors and corrections

The entire Tamil-speaking world knows well that, at the time *Cintāmaṇi* came out, there was only a dim awareness of classics of that sort, in Tamilnadu. Then, in such a pioneer venture, mistakes were inevitable. Faulty readings get corrected, the true meaning of textual passages becomes clear and ever fresh information is unearthed as edition follows edition. There is nothing surprising about this. It is not an easy matter to achieve an entirely perfect edition in a very first venture. In later editions I have corrected the errors that had crept into earlier ones myself. When one continues his research, one will set right facts in the light of the new knowledge one has obtained, facts that had been misunderstood over a long time.

Hasn't Tiruvaḷḷuvar rightly said,

*aṟitō ṟaṟiyāmai kaṇṭaṟṟāl*

"One's ignorance is discovered the more one learns?"

There are indeed a few errors in the *Cintāmaṇi* edition committed out of pure ignorance. I have written in the first edition that Tiruttakkatēvar went to Maturai and met there the scholars of *caṅkam*. Later I found out that this was a mistake. From further research I learned that in fact he met only the members of a Jaina Sangha *(Caṅkam)* at Maturai. The first edition of *Cintāmaṇi* contains a number of errors concerning names of books, names of poets, etc. In course of time I corrected all these. The reading we adopt today as correct may be discovered tomorrow to be faulty, and we adopt a new reading. How can any man, with his limited intellect, lay claim to any conclusion of his as being definitive?

Everyone realizes that. But those who are blinded by envy and jealousy could not see the truth in such matters. In particular, the three Tamil pandits, serving in the schools at Kumpakōṇam, were active in the criticism of my *Cintāmaṇi*. They were people who were indebted to me, too, for certain favours. Their main points were that it was wrong on my part to have published in print a Jaina work; that it was very wrong for the Head of a Saiva Mutt to have encouraged me; that the *Cintāmaṇi* was replete with errors; that these errors exceeded the sands in the sea and the stars in the sky. They printed and published leaflets, first under the names of others, and then also in their own names. They distributed them from street to street in Kumpakōṇam. Then they arranged for their distribution in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi, Tancāvūr, Maturai, Tirunelvēli, Kōyamputtūr, Myūram, Tiruppātirippuliyūr, Madras, and other places. Whoever had been of assistance to me in Madras, to all of these people they have sent whole bunches of the leaflets. Pūṇṭi Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār, Cām Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār, R. V. Srinivāca Aiyar, and all the others have received them and informed me about it.

In the midst of the stormy waves of all this commotion I persued my research in *Pattuppāṭṭu*. There was a short-lived periodical by name of *Kuṭantai Mittiraṉ* appearing in Kumpakōṇam. Articles appeared in it, praising me in one issue and blaming me in another. I never saw any friend of mine moved by all this virulent criticism so that they would lose their regard for me. Those who are accustomed to slanderous criticisms continue to do it as a habit. The language used in such criticisms will not gain any respect for then even if there is any truth in their criticism.

## Prayers to Murukaṉ

One day I was engaged in the study of *Pattuppāṭṭu*, and I was joined by Tirumāṉūrk Kiruṣṇaiyar, Kuṭavāyil Caṇmukam Piḷḷai, and a few students. As we talked, someone mentioned the bunch of critics slandering my work. My mind was already tired enough by the hard task of the searching study of the text, and the actions of that bunch of critics were difficult to bear. I thought, 'If I let myself reply to this kind of criticism, my creative and scholarly work will be over. To a just and objective critism one can reply. How to deal, though, with an unjust, prejudiced, envious slander?' My heart sought help in the devotion to Lord Murukaṉ. That feeling found expression at once in a few stanzas. Here are some of them:

*akamē yorucol aṟaivaṉ ṉikaril*
*makamē ruvaḷait taruḷvaḷ ḷalaruḷ*
*kukaṉē murukā kumarā tiruvē*
*rakavē lavaveṉ ṟaḷainī tiṉamē*

O mind! I will tell you something.
Call Him daily,
The son of the One who
Twisted the unparallelled
Mount Mēru,
Kukaṉē! Murukā! Kumarā!
And Vēlavā!
Of the holy Tiruvērakam.

*malarkoṇ ṭuṉaiyē vaḷipaṭ ṭiṭuvēṉ*
*alarkoṇ ṭuviḷaṅ kalaivā vikaḷcūḻ*
*kalarkaṇ ṭaṟiyāk kaviṉē rakaveṟ*
*palarkaṇ ṭikaḻum paṭivait tateṉē*

I pray to you with flowers
You, the beautiful one
Of Ērakam
Surrounded by lakes
Full of flowers in waves,
And not seen by the low ones,
You have pushed me
To the abuse of many.

*tataitīṅ cuvainaṟ ṟamiḻpā ṭiyuḷam*
*pataiyā tuṟaiyum paṭivait taruḷvāy*
*utaiyā tipaṉē roḷiyā yaḷiyāy*
*citaiyā tuṟaiyun tiruvē rakaṉē*

O Sun, staying at Tiruvērakam
As the light and grace
Uncrumbled,
Keep my mind undisturbed
Singing about
Rich and sweet Tamil

### I write a reply

My critics were becoming excessively angry because I did not care to publish a reply. One day a leaflet was published, entitled *"A Notice Proclaiming the Defects in Cīvakacintāmaṇi."* A number of points listed in it as mistakes were in fact no mistakes at all. I decided to finally write a reply. One day I sat till the small hours of the night, writing out a refutation. My mind was in turmoil. At that moment a soothsayer was passing through the street, declaring, as was his custom, "Better days are ahead, sir, don't you worry!" Although this was his customary street-cry, I took it as referring to me in particular. Somehow I finished my reply. It was drawn.

After attending to my morning obligations I took the sheets with my reply and went to Cātu Cēṣaiyar. I thought someone else should also read what I had written as a refutation to my critics, and, moreover, I hoped he would offer me a suggestion or two since he was a person deeply attached to me.

## The advice of Cātu Cēṣaiyar

Placing the sheets I had written in his hands I said, "Please have a look at this. You know well which direction the controversy about the *Cintāmaṇi* takes. It is not right or profitable to reply to slanderers. And yet I have written a reply, but only because I've been accused of errors where there are none." He took it, and I was eagerly waiting what he will have to say.

He promptly tore it up and put it into the waste-paper basket nearby. I was confused. I was shocked. He looked at me, and began to speak in the gentlest of tones: "Please don't be upset because I tore up those sheets. Don't ever bother about writing such refutations. We know how certain persons go about reviling you and publishing attacks of criticism. And I also know well who these persons are. Has the attitude towards you, of any of us — men like me, or your students, or other friends — changed as a result of their actions? Not a jot! We're sure of that. If it is like this, you need not feel depressed about the whole thing. If you write a reply to this, your enemies will profit by the publicity. They will write a refutation of your reply; you will have to write another refutation, challenging theirs. You will only lose precious time on worthless pursuit. It is the way of the world to obstruct a good thing with a thousand obstacles. Even in England such things happen. Discerning men just ignore that. You must not waste your time and peace of mind on controversy. Please promise me that you'll never write a refutation against abuse."

I had not attempted to defend myself against any criticism before, and I wrote this only after much consideration. It was therefore natural, wasn't it, that I was somewhat upset to see my labours, written out after such decision, going to waste like this. I thought, 'He simply tore it up and threw it away without the slightest hesitation!'

"What are you thinking about?" he said to me again, trying to encourage me. "You must still take up so many good things! Things like this will certainly hinder you. This criticism stands today; tomorrow it will go. A time will come when those who abuse you will be overtaken by remorse, and will regard you as a friend. When they will think what they have done they will be sorry and ashamed. Hence you must never step down into this arena of controversy. Continue your services in the cause of Tamil. God will protect you."

These words comforted me. I took an oath that day in his presence saying, "I will henceforth take no notice of abuse. I will never seek to defend myself against it." Now, when I look back at the past, and also at the present situation, I feel how wise were the golden words of advice given by that great and knowledgeable man. I can any day set right the mistakes I make in the service at the holy feet of Mother Tamil. If, ignoring that service, any man chooses to make me — of little knowledge that I am — a target to shoot at the arrows of his abuse, I simply don't care. Tamil had sprouted from the same source as the sandal tree and the southern breeze, and partakes in their softness and sweetness. Having made the worship and service of that great Tamil deity the sole aim of my life, the waves of heat and hatred dashing against me in the world do not, due to Her gentle care and grace, cause me the least suffering. "They obviously derive satisfaction from abusing me. Seeing that they are satisfied I, too, am pleased." I have adopted this attitude which ensures me peace of mind. I don't know if such attitude is right or wrong; but because of it, my heart remains undisturbed and I am able to go on with my job with full energy. It is the result of long and useful experience. I shall never forget Cātu Cēṣaiyar who was the prime cause of it.

## Letters from a few persons

To some extent I have retreated from the storm of criticism. My mind was again pursuing the research in *Pattupāṭṭu* with vigour. However, friends here and there wrote me letters, urging me to take a stand vis-á-vis my unjust critics. Some of them informed me that they would take up the matter themselves and write to the newspapers in order to chastise my critics. Pūvai Kaliyāṇacuntara Mutaliyār wrote like this, and also a few others. I told them, "Please, do not react to any of the criticism."

From Madras came a letter dated 12-11-1888 written by T. T. Kaṉakacuntaram Piḷḷai. Although there was a rivalry between him and me in the matter of *Pattuppāṭṭu*, the things which he wrote filled me with amazement and comfort.

"..... I chanced to obtain a booklet called *A Notice Proclaiming the Defects in Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. Although I understood very well what was the real aim of its writers, I had still some doubts whether there might be a bit of truth in their arguments, and so I took my handwritten copy of the *Cintāmaṇi* and scrutinized every single argument of theirs. When I looked — well, nothing was as they had said! I found every single reading you produced correct. It is a sin that I believed then. My conclusion is that by the impossibility of their method and by the noisy rage of their envious and petty minds, they have excommunicated themselves from the community of scholars..." I quote from parts of his letter. All my sufferings of mind, because of their criticism, left me, because of this one letter.

## The storms turn in another direction

The bunch of 'critics', because of my continued silence, grew weary and dejected. However, Kuṭavāyil Caṇmukam Piḷḷai, who had come to help me in my activities, did not listen to my admonishments, and attacked my 'critics' in spite of whatever I might have been saying. His language was as awful as theirs. They entered into controversies concerning their respective published textbooks and commentaries. They wrote poisonous prose; they published satires; they threw around abuse and accusations; the battle entered even the field of poetry. Words which they would be ashamed to throw into each other's face appeared in printed stanzas. At last there was nothing left, and nothing was excessive enough.

From the very first that he got entangled in this tasteless controversy, I told Caṇmukam Piḷḷai to stop coming to me.

# Chapter 108

## *Pattuppāṭṭu* off the press

I began to deliberate what I should do if pressed for funds to pay for the publication of *Pattupāṭṭu*. I decided to get friends to subscribe to the edition just as I had done for *Cintāmaṇi*, and having printed a prospectus I sent it round to many people.

### Taking subscriptions

Several people helped — the Deputy Collector of Maturai M. Tillaināyakam Piḷḷai, Sātu Cēṣaiyar, Cōlaṉmāḷikai Rattiṉam Piḷḷai, Ār. Vī. Śrīṉivācaiyar, the Tañcāvūr advocate Kī. Ci. Śrīṉivāca Piḷḷai and others. Srī Mutturāmaliṅkaṭ Tēvar, the Zamindar of Çiṟuvayal,although I had not known him before, sent a letter promising proper financial help. I was able to raise up to two hundred rupees.Then I happened to hear that a prominent citizen of Kumpakōṇam had remarked, "The College pandit Cāminātaiyar is making collection, saying he's going to print the *Pattuppāṭṭu*. This seems to be a way to earn some money." I stopped the fund-raising campaign from that same day.

I wrote to Civaṉ Piḷḷai, a scholar at Poḷḷācci, asking him if he had any copies of *Pattuppāṭṭu*. He sent me one. I investigated it, and then planned a trip to Madras with Tirumāṉūrk Kiruṣṇaiyar.

### Āṟumukat Tampirāṉ

The 11th of December, 1888, was an auspicious day. On that morning came Tāṇṭavarāyat Tampirāṉ, the Great Steward of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai Mutt at Kuṉṟakkuṭi, and the *vittuvāṉ* of that Mutt, Tillaināta Piḷḷai, to talk to me. "We went to Tiruvāvaṭuturai to ask permission to anoint and appoint Śrī Āṟumukat Tampirāṉ, your co-student and the Mutt's *vittuvāṉ*, as Junior Head of our establishment. His Holiness gave his consent. So, we came here to inform you of this happy event." "I am indeed very very pleased", I answered. "I find it excellent when scholars are appointed as heads of Mutts. Āṟumukat Tampirāṉ is an outstanding scholar.I'm leaving today for Madras in connection with the publication of *Pattuppāṭṭu*. The fact that I've heard about this happy event today indeed encourages me. It seems that both your and my efforts are going to bring fruits." I said good-bye to them and sent them off.

### Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar's assistance

I then took leave of father and the others, and went to Tiruvāvaṭuturai. The Head of the Mutt, Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, was pleased to hear of my project, gave me a sum of sixty rupees, spoke words of encouragement, and sent me on to Madras.

Next day, Kirusṇaiyar and I arrived at Madras, and went to stay in Cēlam Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār's bungalow. He had by then left for Allahabad. We left all our luggage at his bungalow, and I went to see my friends. I met Tēraḻuntūr Irājakōpālācāriyar, told him what had brought me to Madras this time, and asked what press I could use for my work. He advised the same Tirāviṭa Ratnākara Press that had printed the *Cintāmaṇi*, and I made arrangements to have the work published there.

The owner of the press demanded higher rates; he said, "This involves more work than the *Cintāmaṇi;* so the rate of printing will be higher". I agreed because I argued with myself that it was a place that I already knew well.

## My lodging

I stayed in the bungalow of Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār, took my meals in a home in Puracaippākkam, and watched the printing of the text in the press situated in Avatāṇam Pāppaiyar Street. Since this proved very tiresome I stayed in a room in the same house where I boarded, and read the proofs during late evenings and nights. It was due to the arrangements made for me by a student, Katirāmaṅkalam Cuppiramaṇiya Aiyar, who in fact had that room rented, so that things could be thus simplified for me.

Since I had not seen so far a copy of the simple basic text of the *Pattuppāṭṭu*, I was all the time making enquiries concerning manuscripts available in the homes of various scholars in Madras. At that occasion I was reminded of a scholar of great renown.

## The house of Aṇṇācāmi Upāttiyāyar

Many years ago a great *vittuvāṉ* by name Tiruvampalattiṉṉamutam Piḷḷai lived in Mayilāppūr. He was a student ofAmpalavāṇa Kavirāyar of Tirunelvēli; well-versed in the most ancient literature of Tamil; when Śrī Piḷḷai came in his young days to Madras he studied a few books with that particular scholar. My Master had told me that there were a good many palmleaf manuscripts in Tiruvampalattiṉṉamutam Piḷḷai's house.

As soon as I recollected all this, I began to inquire where exactly was the house of that scholar in Mayilāppūr,and who were his descendants. No one was able to tell me anything. At that time there lived in Mayilāppūr, at the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai Mutt, an old monk call Caravaṇac Cāmī. He was of Jaffna origin, and Śrī Āṟumuka Nāvalar had praised him as "Caravaṇac Cāmiyār, the Lion of Public oration". The old man was a Tamil scholar and an incomparably capable physician. Someone advised me to approach the venerable old man, for he might remember something; so I went to the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai Mutt and sought the grand old man out. When I saw him he was about seventy. Nevertheless, he was of a sturdy and firm constitution, and he had unusually bright eyes. He had a group of students who took care of him. Being a Siddha physician, he would offer medicine to those who came to search for it, and cure their maladies.

I asked him about Tiruvampalattiṉṉamutam Piḷḷai. Luckily, the old man admitted to have known that scholar, and told me that he had no children, and that all his palmleaf books were likely to be found in the house of Aṇṇācāmi Upāttiyāyar who lived in Mantaiveḷi.

I went to Mantaiveḷi and traced down Aṇṇācāmi Upāttiyāyar's house. Since, however, Aṇṇācāmi Upāttiyāyar was no more, I could only meet his son-in-law. As I took with me friends who could be of help, I chose an opportune moment and asked him about the books, whereupon he spread out for me all the palmleaf books available in his house. There was among them an incomplete copy of the commentary on *Pattuppāṭṭu*. There was also a commentary on *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai*. I took these, and a few minor works, too. I also found a damaged copy that contained the whole of *Patiṉeṇkīḻkkaṇakku*. It was there that I found the poem known as *Kainnilai*.

Later I obtained another copy of the commentry on *Pattupāṭṭu* from V. Kaṉakacapai Piḷḷai, retired Superintendent of Post Offices. I found all of them useful.

## The beginning of printing

The printing of *Pattuppāṭṭu* started. That job went on at a brisk pace. Tirumāṉūrk Kiruṣṇaiyar was of constant and invaluable help. Tēraḻuntūr Irājakōpālācāriyar dedicated all his free time to me and my work.

## Conversations with Pūṇṭi Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār

I went to see Pūṇṭi Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār often and talked to him. This time I was able to grow quite intimate with him. Whenever I went to him we would talk about Tamil poetry and Tamil poets. We would talk and talk, oblivious of the passing of time, forgetting even to eat.

Mutaliyār was then composing his *pirapantam*, the *Kaccikkalampakam*. Hence we discussed frequently the literary norms of the *kalampakam* genre. I would quote many stanzas from the *kalampakam* poems composed by Śrī Piḷḷai as well as from those which I had studied with him. Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār had a particular talent — to pick out fast the very substance of any poet's work and appreciate it. He never needed to hear anything a second time. It was a joy to spend some time with him, watching him as he listened to poetry with a face all lit up and his mind completely absorbed in the meaning of the verses heard, and from time to time relishing the taste of the poetic beauty, passing on to others, in choice words, the delights he himself had experienced. He used to compliment me frequently saying, "If there were people like you in this city, time could be spent very well indeed."

The College vacation was about to end in the month of January, and I had to return to Kumpakōṇam. Accordingly I settled Tirumāṉūr Kiruṣṇaiyar in Madras and arranged with him that he would see to it that the printing of the book proceeded without hindrances, and myself went back to Kumpakōṇam. Even two or three days free at a time would be enough for me to run to Madras and attend to the printing of *Pattupāṭṭu* myself. Approximately about the same time I learned about the passing away of Puracaippākkam Aṣṭāvatāṉam Capāpati Mutaliyār and then of the death of Toḻuvūr Vēlāyuta Mutaliyār, and that made me very sad.

## I refuse a Madras job

Pūṇṭi Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār used to write to me frequently. His letters were both in prose and in verse.At one occasion he wrote, "If you would come to take a job at the Presidency College in Madras, it would help your editorial work. There are good facilities here. I too would be very content. If you agree, I shall take the necessary steps." I knew well how much influence Mutaliyār wielded in the City. If he would apply himself to it, he could arrange for my transfer to the Presidency College with complete ease. I too had a wish to ultimately come to Madras. Living in Madras would be of incomparable help to my further projects of Tamil publications. From Kumpakōṇam it was impossible to arrange for effective communication and fast publication. So I first thought: Divine Providence has taken the shape of Mutaliyār's suggestion. That thought however, was followed by another which warned me: you would lose touch with the Mutt at Tiruvāvaṭuturai. But then, had not Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar, when he sent me to Kumpakōṇam, said that he wished me to proceed from there to the City and adorn that place made illustrious by scholars like Makāliṅkaiyar and Vicāka Perumāḷ Aiyar? I remembered his blessings with affection, and thought, 'Perhaps what great men say with love will come true. This may be just the time for his prophesy to be fulfilled.'

I read out Mutaliyār's letter to father. He said, "It's true. But can I get my daily dip in the Kāvēri in Madras? And of course I never travel by train. My heart would not let me leave the region of this holy Kāvēri at the end of my days!" These words were decisive in my hesitation and changed the direction of my thoughts. I reached a decision. I wrote to Mutaliyār, "Taking into account the advanced age of my father I find it necessary to remain here." This took place in the beginning of March 1889.

When I went to Madras in April, during my holidays, I explained the attitude of my father to Mutaliyār. He understood. He then showed me the stanzas of his composition, the *Kaccikkalampakam,* and I offered my opinion. He was content, and made use of some of my observations. One day I happened to meet and have a talk with Professor Cuntaram Piḷḷai of the Tiruvanantapuram college. At the Cosmopolitan Club, he read for Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār and for me many portions of *Maṉōṉmaṇīyam,* a drama he composed.

### The Publication is accomplished

Irājakōpālāccāriyar, having realized the great value of *Pattuppāṭṭu,* suggested the addition of an alphabetical glossary of rare words and phrases, and demonstrated, with cabinet he brought along, how such glossaries and indexes can be prepared. I saw how easily such alphabetical index could be managed, and ordered two such cabinets to be made for me. Ever since, the compilation of indexes became a very easy matter indeed.

By the grace of God, the printing of *Pattuppāṭṭu* was completed in June of 1889. I felt a boundless satisfaction that this book was out in a mere six month's time.

## Chapter 109

## Research work in *Cilappatikāram*

In the *Pattuppāṭṭu* edition there was first the Introduction, then came the text with Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's commentary, followed by the laudatory verses on the commentary, and at the end,a glossary of rare words, of rare phrases, and errata.

## The introduction to *Pattuppāṭṭu*

In the Introduction, I described first the general excellence of the whole anthology; then the story and background of each poem, and then the details about my search for palmleaf scripts including the names of all who helped me in that search. I appended a note saying, "Śrī P. Kumāracuvāmi Mutaliyār, a foremost and greatly respected citizen of the town of Colombo who holds the Tamil language in the highest esteem, wrote to me repeatedly and affectionately since the publication of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* was over to encourage me — now that I greatly desire to study and publish all ancient classics that had become so rare — to announce the publication of the second among the Five Great Epics, *Cilappatikāram*, with Aṭiyārkkunallār's commentary, promising to bear the cost himself, and hence I decided to publish that book as the first."

Through the study of the commentaries on *Cintāmaṇi* and *Pattuppāṭṭu* I learned to appreciate Naccinārkkiṉiyar's amazingly broad erudition. Without his commentaries I could not have come across many rare and precious bits of information. Later I realized the true greatness of that master of commentators by studying the commentaries on *Kalittokai* and *Tolkāppiyam*.

Our commentators are true benefactors of literature, teaching everyone to appreciate the greatness of the text. Through the commentaries of Ṉaccinārkkiṉiyar I came to know of his great respect and regard for ancient Tamil texts and their authors and also his hatred of those who made changes in the texts later. He was one of those who had bestowed the greatest benefits on the growth of Tamil. I have not written out a special biography of the great commentator for *Pattuppāṭṭu*, but composed a praise-poem which I appended to the Introduction.

*evaṉāla vāyiṉiṭai yamutavā yuṭaiyaṉeṉa iyampap peṟṟōṉ*
*evaṉpaṇṭaip paṉuvalpala viṟavātu nilavavurai eḻuti yīntōṉ*
*evaṉparama vupakāri yevaṉacci ṇārkkiṉiyaṉ eṉumpē rāḷaṉ*
*avaṉpāta virupōtu meppōtu malarkaveṉa takattu maṉṉō*

He who is praised
As one who has
Nectar in the mouth of poison,
He who made ancient classics
Live and saved them from death
With his commentary,
He who helps everyone
He who has the name Naccinārkkiṉiyaṉ
May his feet twice a day
No, always, flower in my mind

The *Pattuppāṭṭu* which I was somehow able to bring out by the grace of God received unanimous praise from one and all in Tamilnadu. Because of it, many precious historical data as well as the cultural state of affairs among ancient Tamil people became finally known. Scholars lauded it as a source-book of rich and variegated research.

## Minor books

After that book went to the press, I prepared two other editions — a *pirapantam* by Srī Kacciyappa Muṉivar called *Āṉanta Ruttirēcar Vaṇṭu Viṭutūtu,* and a work by *Māyūram* Rāmaiyar entitled *Mayilaiyantāti.*

*Friends who have received Pattuppāṭṭu* wrote to me very enthusiastic and encouraging letters. From that moment on I dedicated all my attention to a detailed study of *Cilappatikāram.*

## First rectital of Kaccikkalampakam

It was at that time that Pūṇṭi Araṅkanāṭa Mutaliyar, having finally published his *Kaccikkalampakam,* arranged for its *araṅkēṟṟam* with the help of a few pandits at the Madras Toṇṭaimaṇṭalam Tuḷuva Vēḷāḷar High School. As he had also invited me to participate and read a few poems, I went to Madras twice, once in October 1889, once in November, stayed for a few days, and took part in the recital of the *Kalampakam.* The first reading was attended by several hundred people. The *pirapantams* and other minor classics I had studied before, came now very handy. My close friendship with Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār increased as a result of my participation, and also made a number of new friends among the lovers of Tamil. I derived very many benefits from the friendship of such eminent person as Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār and from the readings at that *araṅkēṟṟam.*

Kiruṣṇaiyar, who had been so very helpful in Madras during the work on *Pattuppāṭṭu,* went to Vēlūr as soon as the publishing activities were finished, and stayed there for a while. Then he went to Ciṟuvayal, placed himself under patronship of the Zamindar Srī Muttu Rāmaliṅka Tēvar, taught him a number of good Tamil books, and lived well as the court-poet and scholar. While he was there he copied and sent me manuscripts of books like *Puṟanāṉūṟu* and other texts.

## Taṇṭapāni viruttam and other pieces

I had a friend at the Port of Colombo by name T. Kumāracāmi Ceṭṭiyār who used to write often, giving expression to his affection. He repeatedly urged me in writing to publish in print the *Vināyaka Purāṇam.* Srī Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar of Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai told me often, too, that I should publish it. I went through the text several times. Although I thought that one day I might publish it, somehow the opportunity never arose.

At Ilantai Nakar, near Colombo Harbour, Kumāracāmi Ceṭṭiyār constructed a temple, and installed in it the image of Taṇṭapāṇi. He also provided an idol for festival occasions. He wrote to me to ask me whether I could compose a few stanzas in honour of the two icons. At his request I composed a set of ten *viruttam* stanzas in praise of the main deity Taṇṭapaṇi, and in honour of Srī Muttu Kumārar, the professional image, five *kīrttaṉams,* a song for the start of profession, and verses to be sung during the Festival of the Swing.

*cētip pariya tavavoḻukkac celvam vāynta kuṟumuṉikkuc*
*cevvē tamiḻi ṉilakkaṇattaic ceppi yaruḷi yoppillā*
*ātic caṅkat tiṭaimēya vatanā lemmāṉ tamiḻp parama*
*ācā ṉeṉpa taṟintaṭaintē ṉakaṟṟā taḷitta niṉkaṭaṉē*
*cātip paimpoṟ taruvāti taḻaippa vorumāp perumutalait*
*taṭinte yarimuṉ ṉōrtuyaran taṇappa varimā mutaṟṟolaittōy*

*tātiṟ polippūn cōlaikaḷuñ calace malarnīr vāvikaḷun*
*taḻaikkum vaḷamā rilantainakart taṇṭapāṇip perumāṉē*

*I come to you knowing well*
*There you are*
*The greatest of the teachers of Tamil*
*Who taught Tamil grammar clear*
*To Kuṟumuṉi, rich with*
*The renowned saintly behaviour*
*And presided over the unique*
*First Tamil Caṅkam.*
*It's your duty to accept me*
*You are the one who killed the lion*
*Wiping out the worries of the predecessors*
*Of Ari who punished the great allegator*
*To prosper as a pure golden tree!*
*You Taṇṭapāṇip perumāḷ*
*Who reside at the fertile Ilantai*
*Rich with ponds full of flowers*
*And groves full of flowers of the*
*Golden pollen dust.*

*I have often heard Kōpālakiruṣṇa Pāratiyār and Vaiyai Irāmacāmi Aiyar say that in order to compose a kīrttanām* one must know well the trends in music. Due to them and because of my own experience, I knew how to combine the theme and countertheme, how to join the meaning of the refrain with the meaning of the variations, how to put together the various parts of the variations, and other similar technical matters. So, now I got the opportunity to demonstrate my knowledge and compose real *kīrttanāms*. Well, I actually composed several of them, in *rāgas, curuṭṭi, cakāṉā, cencuruṭṭi* and *tujāvanti*.

Here is a portion of the *kīrttaṉam* in *rāga tujāvanti:*

### Pallavi

*uṉaimaṟa vāta oruvaram aṭiyēṉuk*
*kuvantaruḷ purintiṭu vāyē*

### Anupallavi

*naṉaimalarp poḻiṟcentil nakari leḻuntaruḷi*
*nampu maṭiyavark kiṉpa maruḷpuri*
*nāta paracuka pōta vaṉutiṉam* *(uṉai)*

### Caraṇam

*1. ulavum pacumayilu muṉatu tiruvuruvum*
*oḷiviṉṟi niṉaippateṇ nāḷō — tuṉpam*
*palavum puriyumaintu pulaṉukku yāṉṟoṇṭu*
*paṇṇic celumaṭimai yāḷō — vaḷam*
*kulavum Paraṅkirit tēṉē — cura*

*kulaṇkaḷaik kāttaruḷvōṉē — enk̄um*
*nilavum paramporuḷ nīyeṉ ṟaṟintatoṇṭar*
*niṟainta paḻaṉiyil uṟainta kurupara*
*nīpa maṇintapra tāpa curavara* (*uṉai*)

### Variation

When do I think ceaselessly
Of the roaring green peacock
And your holy shape?
Am I the person to serve
A slave to the five senses
Which heap sufferings?
O Honey of the fertile Paraṅkuṉṟam!
You who protect the clan of Tēvas!
O Highest Kuru living in Paḷaṉi
Replete with devotees
Who know you are everywhere
You have always been the Highest
Flower-adorned shining boon of Gods!

### Theme

Be pleased to grant me this one Grace:
Never to forget your divine Face!

### Countertheme

You arose graciously in the town of Cenṭil with groves of honeyed flowers

Bestowing sweet grace upon your devotees in faith on every day

O Lord of Heavenly Happiness

I read all my *kīrttanāms* to my father and obtained his approval. Kumāracāmi Ceṭṭiyār was beside himself with delight when he got my poems and my *kīrttaṉams*. Later in 1891 I published them separately at Kumpakōṇam.

## Reviews

The Municipal Chairman of Pālaikkāṭu Rao Bahadur P. I. Ciṉṉacāmi Piḷḷai, wrote a very detailed review of *Pattuppāṭṭu*, after he had received it, and published it in *The Hindu* on 13. 3. 1890 under the nom-de-plume 'Historicus'. P. Cuntaram Piḷḷai, the Trivandrum Professor, wrote another review for the *Christian College Magazine*. Those who were interested in Tamil read these reviews for the *Christian College Magazine*. Those who were interested in Tamil read these reviews, and got acquainted through them with the *Pattuppāṭṭu*. Many people wrote to me, insisting that I should publish yet many more such ancient Tamil classics. The joy which I naturally felt owing to all this praise and sympathy made me plunge into the *Cilappatikāram* research with renewed energy. But the manuscripts damped my spirits. First there was the copy and commentary on paper given to me by Cēlam Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār. Besides, there was a copy of the text alone, and another copy of the commentary as such, both of which had belonged to Srī Piḷḷai. Another copy I had was that of Tiyākarāca Ceṭṭiyār. In addition I had a few other copies. Inspite of all that there were other reasons to hold up my research work.

## Commentaries on Cilappatikāram

I examined in detail all the scripts before me. Aṭiyārkkunallār's commentary was a veritable ocean. For illustrations he draws on multitude of works in threefold Tamil-poetry, music and drama — as also on scientific treatises and books on Yoga and other branches of knowledge and art. I saw in Aṭiyārkkunallar̲ an excellent quality which could not be seen in Naccin̲ārkkin̲iyar: he gives not only the name of the work he quotes from; but, in certain places, relevant information pertaining to those works themselves. I can hardly describe the sort of trouble I had gone to trace the sources of quotations given in the other's commentaries on *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* and *Pattuppāṭṭu*, with only the words, "So have said others" given, and even when these sources were found, to construe them in an intelligible manner. One does not suffer such frustration with Aṭiyārkkunallār. Those who are engaged in research know well how rare such assistance can be.

*Cilappatikāram* is divided into thirty *kātais*. But I could not obtain Aṭaiyārk kunallār's commentary on the seventh *kātai, kān̲alvari*, and on the last eleven beginning with the twentieth, *Vaḷukkurai kātai* — Arguing the case. There is a glossary to the whole of *Cilappatikāram*. A copy of it was given to me by my friend Cakkaravartti Rājakōpālācāriyar of Tēral̲untūr. It was a very old and damaged copy. I recognized some features which indicated that this glossary was earlier in date than Aṭiyārkkunallār's commentary. But it was very very difficult to follow the meaning of the text with this copy in hand to guide me. However, this glossary of rare terms was of welcome help shedding light on certain passages in Aṭiyārkkunallār's commentary.

## The missing parts of the commentary

In a certain context, Atiyārkkunallār says in his commentary, "We shall deal with this in detail under *Kān̲alvari*, and, in a later context coming after the chapter *Kān̲alvari*, he writes, "We have already explained this under the heading *Āṇi.*" Reading this, the conclusion was quite certain that he had obviously commented on *Kān̲alvari* too. In other places we find, "We shall dwell on this at length in the chapter *Alar̲paṭukātai*," and "We shall describe this in detail in the chapter *Kaṭṭurai kātai.*" Hence, one may safely conclude that a commentary was written for the final parts of the text, too. So, I decided I should undertake my pilgrimage searching for Tamil manuscript again, to discover and secure various copies of *Cilappatikāram.*

The commentary was indeed in part incomplete, and, moreover, there were absolutely no works extant in our days dealing with the two modes of music and drama. I was afraid it would take a very long time to reconstruct them. I thought, 'Whatever I touch, there's problem upon problem'.

### I write letters to friends

As I intended this time to go and search in an area I have never searched before, I wrote to Cēlam Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār: "Tamil manuscripts may perhaps be found in places around Cēlam. I have not got the commentary on latter portions of *Cilappatikāram*. I hear several poets, like Cokkappa Nāvalar, the author of a commentary on *Tañcaivāṇaṉ Kōvai*, lived in Cēlam. If there are any descendants of these scholars I would like to meet them and if I search there I may get something. Please do help me."

I also wrote to the head administrator of the monastery at Kuṉṟakkuṭi, Appā Piḷḷai, to tell him that I heard of places in and around Civakaṅkai where I could possibly find palmscripts in Tamil, and asked him to provide me with the pertinent information so that I could come and see.

At that time, P. Kumāracāmi Mutaliyār had gone to London to accompany his son who was going to study there. He wrote to me from there. In his letter he informed me that, after a short stay in London, he intends to go to France, Germany and other European countries, visit great libraries there and find out about Indian palmleaf manuscripts kept there. I wrote to him at once asking him to search for manuscripts of *Cilappatikāram*.

A favourable reply arrived from Cēlam Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār. So I set forth this time on a pilgrimage in search of more *Cilappatikāram* manuscripts.

## Chapter 110

## Useless travels

On my way to Cēlam I alighted at Tiruccirāppaḷḷi and visited a few places in my search of manuscripts. With the help of Srī Paṭṭāpirāma Piḷḷai I could knock at the door of several scholars and look in their houses. I found copies of *Puṟattiraṭṭu* and of a commentary to *Vīracōḻiyam* belonging to Aṇṇācāmi Piḷḷai, the Tamil pandit in the S. P. J. College. It was interesting to see, in the script of *Vīracōḻiyam*, a few *loci* which had not appeared in its printed edition.

### *Puṟattiraṭṭu*

When I first started my search for manuscripts I was not much interested in the palmleaf copies of books which had already been printed. However, with the progress of my research I found out that palmleaf copies were quite valuable for the correction of misprints and emendation of readings and textual variations, and I began to regard even such manuscripts as gold, and whenever, I came across some, I would study them carefully, too. At that occassion I got such copy of *Puṟattiraṭṭu* from Aṇṇācāmi Piḷḷai.

### Varakaṉēri

Subsequently I went to the house of a prominent citizen by name Cavarimuttā Piḷḷai who used to be a student of Srī Piḷḷai, and who lived at Varakaṉēri, next to Tiruccirāppaḷḷi. Although he was a Christian, he has collected many Saiva *pirapantams, purāṇams* and *castirams* as well as books written by Srī Piḷḷai. I took a few of these, those that I needed. The Tamil pandit at the National High School, Aṟumuka Nayiṉār, possessed a few manuscripts, too. I scrutinized them. I saw a few texts belonging to the corpus of *Patiṉeṇkīḻkkaṇakku*. I searched in a few more places. A copy of *Cilappatikāram* was nowhere to be had. A *vittuvāṉ* of the name of Cuppiramaṇiya Aiyar who lived in a hamlet near Tirucirapuram had a few rare *pirapantams.*

From Tirucci I went to Kuḷittalai and searched for manuscripts in surrounding villages. All was in vain. So, finally, I arrived in Cēlam.

### Cēlam

In Cēlam I hoped, full of great expectations, to complete my mission early with the help of Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār. When I enquired about the descendants of Cokkappa Nāvalar I was told that there was one there by name of Capāpati Mutaliyār. I asked where his house was and found it. As I had expected, he had many old palmleaf manuscripts eagerly I examined them one by one. Most of these scripts on palm leaves were damaged, broken, split across the middle, falling apart, rotten and decayed. Nothing that I could use was among them. All I got was the whole of *Kamparāmāyaṇam,* with separate manuscript for each of the seven books. In Cūramaṅkalam, a village near Cēlam, lived a Siddha physician called Aṟumukam Piḷḷai. I heard that there were countless manuscripts in his house, and went there to have a look. Aṟumukam Piḷḷai was a very active man. His face was strikingly bright. I asked, "What is your age?" He said he was 97. I was absolutely amazed. He certainly looked sixty at most! I thought, 'He does take care of the bodies of others, true, but he also keeps himself extremely well.'

### The book of Akattiyar

He kept in his house the palmleaf manuscripts in a separate room, all neatly arranged. When I entered I saw that there were at least five hundred of them. I asked how many of them were ancient works.

"All these are old manuscripts", he answered. "There are works here by Akastiyar and all that."

Hearing the name Akastiyar I at once thought of the large grammar he is supposed to have composed, called *Akattiyam.* "Oh please, give it to me", I said, and satdown to examine it. He brought a certain script, saying, "My family has been preserving these scripts carefully for generations. To find the like of them anywhere else is most rare."

I untied the bundle and looked. The letters of the script were bold and clear. The title of the palmleaf book was something like *Akastiyar Purāṇam*. I looked within. It was a medical treatise. There were many like that ascribed to Akastiyar. All of them, without exception, were medical books. I got fed up with their sight.

"Don't you have any manuscripts dealing with grammar or literature?" I asked Āṟumukam Piḷḷai.

He said No very decisively. I didn't say anything, and returned the way I came.

### Pākaṟpaṭṭi

Then I went to a village called Pākaṟpaṭṭi and searched in the library of Srīṉivāsa Nāyakar, the landlord. He held Tamil in great esteem; he loved the *Kamparāmāyaṇam*. He possessed ten copies of the epic; they were some hundred and fifty years old scripts. Wherever I went, I always asked whether there were manuscripts available.

### Beautiful sculptures

I heard that in a village called Tāramaṅkalam there was an old temple with many beautiful sculptures, and, moreover, that in the houses of Adisaivas living there, there may be many old manuscripts. So I went there. First I approached the Adisaivas and examined their palmleaf scripts. There were mostly Agamas and other ritual texts.

I went to the temple. I don't have the talent to describe the beauty of the sculptures I saw there. There was a life-size sculpture on every single pillar. To contemplate and truly enjoy even a single one, one would need a whole day. There is a sculpture depicting Rāma as he shoots his arrows at Vāli. When one approaches Rāma's statue and looks at Vāli, Vāli's shape is well visible. From the vicinity of Vāli's statue, however, the figure of Rāma cannot be seen. I was amazed when I realized how marvelously the sculptor had represented in stone the fact that Rāma killed Vāli from ambush!

There is a Siva temple opposite. Therein, too, there are many rare works of sculpture which could not be carved even if one spends lakhs and lakhs of rupees. There are amazingly beautiful little sculptures which demostrate well the magic skills of hands producing almost miniature works. They have covered the entrance to the temple by a screen of split bamboo. The wealth of sculpture oozing indescribable beauty, to be seen inside, is a witness to the supreme skill and artistic taste of our forbears; but outside, that ugly screen of split bamboo, instead of a door, is a sign of the indifference, neglect and poverty of our times. One opens the offensive bamboo curtain with hesitation. What is going to be inside? But those who dare to enter, unmindful of the abominable screen, will find inside loveliness incarnate. As I opened the bamboo "door" it scratched and stabbed my hand; I went in, I saw, and as I came out again, my eyes were pierced and my soul stabbed by what I saw around, and I thought with great sadness of the miserable state of this country.

Next to that small temple was a round pond. I was pleased to see even there a number of sculptures. A person who came along said to me, "I'll show you something, just watch." I did. He took a stone and threw it straight across the pond. The stone hit the opposite bank, swept back, hit against the shore at a different spot, stroked thus three times against the slope of the bank and finally returned to the original spot. I asked, "Whose holy trick is this?" "Kaṭṭiyappa Mutaliyār's, who was in olden days the royal supervisor here," was the answer.

Even though I did not lay my hand on a copy of *Cilappatikāram* there, the trip to Tāramaṅkalam was hot in vain, since I have enjoyed very much seeing those exquisite sculptures. From there I went to a few other places, but I have not got what I searched for. In a few Vīrasaiva houses I saw parts of the dictionary compiled by Father Beschi under the title *Caturakarāti*. There is a proverb which says, "A cart in a ferry-boat; a ferry-boat in a cart." I was keen on getting ancient books preserved on palmleaves, published in print. On that occasion, I saw the *Caturakarāti*, published in print, in the shape of a palmleaf manuscript, and I realized how deeply Tamil people were steeped in ancient customs — in their own tradition.

### Karivalamvanta Nallūr

I returned to Kumpakōṇam having achieved nothing. I was so worried about obtaining somehow or other good copies of *Cilappatikāram* that I was almost unable to sleep. I decided to go again to Pāṇṭināṭu and hunt there for manuscripts on palm leaves. It was difficult to combine my College work with a trip searching for the manuscripts. If I went to the Tirunelvēli region, it would mean to stay away for a few days and search thoroughly and in relative leisure. Since my College job did not permit that, I decided to confine my search to one place at a time; and so I went first to Karivalam vanta Nallūr. I have been to that place once before, during Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar's time. I was told that all manuscripts that had belonged to Varakuṇa Pāṇṭiyar were stored in the local temple. That was the reason why I chose to visit the place for a second time.

I went straight to the temple and found myself in the shrine of the deity, The Lord with the Milk-White Complexion — Pālvaṇṇa Nātar. Those who love Tamil know well the simple and moving poems composed by Varakuṇa Pāṇṭiyar; it makes them think of that particular king. I stood in the sanctum and recited.

*muṉṉaip piṟappiṉ tavappayaṉō muḷutu maṟiyā mūṭanivaṉ*
*eṉṉak karuttil iraṅkiyō yātō aṟiyēṉ iravupakal*
*kaṉṉaṟ pākiṟ kōṟṟēṉiṟ kāṉiyiṟ kaṉinta kavipāṭa*
*aṉṉap paḻaṉa vayaṟkaruvai āṇṭā ṉeṉṉai āṇṭatuvē.*

Is it the fruit of merit
Earned in former birth?
Is it the pity that
I am a fool knowing nothing?
No, I dont know.
To sing of you day and night
In stanzas of sugarcane juice,
In wild honey,
In ripened fruit of fruits,
O Lord of Karuvai!
In the midst of fields with swans
You made me.

Then I prayed: "Relying on your guidance and grace I have dedicated myself to the service of Tamil. Please help me secure a good copy of *Cilappatikāram.*" Afterwards I went to find out where the manuscripts were stored. As I went to search for the trustee of the temple I ran into an assistant of his. I asked him whether Varatuṅka Rāma Pāṇṭiyar's death aniversary was being observed every year at the temple's expense, since I remembered having heard that it was.

He said that indeed it was being observed.

"Is it true that all the palmleaf books that had belonged to Varakuṇa Pāṇṭiyar are kept in the temple?

"I don't know anything about that. There was a large stack of old palmleaves, like a hay-trick, mixed up with the temple account-books-something like that."

"Is that so? Where are they? Would you please take me to that place?"

"Why are you in such a hurry? When Varakuṇa Pāṇṭiyar died, all his property is said to have passed to the temple. It was then that his whole collection of palmleaf books was apparently lodged here."

"I know that. Where are they now?"

"I have seen myself a lot of palmleaves strewn about like so much rubbish. Who knows to what age those account-books belonged!"

"Are there no other manuscripts?"

"They were all scattered about, everything mixed-up."

I was about to lose my temper at his delaying tactics. I said, "Come on, let's go!"

"Why do you call me? They discussed what to do with so much rubbish. Finally they did just as the Agama Scriptures enjoin."

I did not understand. "What did they do with the books?" I asked, greatly agitated.

"Well, it is said that one should not let old palmleaves lying about to be seen just like that. And that the proper way to dispose of them is to dip them in ghee and offer them to the God of Fire. This is exactly what was done here."

"Ha!" I let out a scream, beside myself.

He described what happened: "A big square pit was dug; fire was kindled; the entire lot of those old palmleaves was dipped in ghee, and then committed to the flames as offering."

Is this what any Agama would prescribe? I felt my anger rise like waves of fury. If a sacred text really indicated that this should be done, that text ought to have been offered to the flames first! There *was* a practice in olden days that, if palmleaf scripts grew brittle with age, they were transcribed on new palm leaves, and *then* the old ones were committed to the flames. There was thus no loss at all, the old copy could go since there was the new copy. These sages of modern days forgot to make new copies but were at the same time guilty of destroying those palmleaf books in fire. What stupidity! How many rare books disappeared altogether from the world like this because of such ignorance!

From the moment I heard the report that all of Varakuṇa Pāṇṭiyar's books had thus been offered as a meal to the Lord of Fire I had no peace in my heart; all my composure went. I despaired of deliverance ever coming to bless this land.

Originally I had come with the wish to spend two full days there. They had relieved me of those efforts. I went to the temple again. I complained and prayed, "Have mercy on us, so that such atrocity is never again repeated."

Then I recited,

*cintaṉai yuṉakkut tantēṉ tiruvaru ḷeṉakkut tantāy*
*vantaṉai yuṉakkut tantēṉ malaraṭi yeṉakkut tantāy*
*paintuṇa ruṉakkut tantēṉ parakatī eṉakkut tantāy*
*kantaṉaip payanta nātā karuvaiyil vāḻuntēvē*

I've given myself to you in meditation,
You've given yourself to me in grace.
I've given myself to you in worship,
You've given me the shelter of your feet and face.
I've offered you fresh flowers,
You've offered me heavenly bliss.
O Lord, Begetter of Skanda,
O God that in Karuvai lives!

I returned to Kumpakōṇam empty-handed.

These two trips then proved to be useless, too. I carried on my research as before, wondering when God was going to bless me with a good copy of *Cilappatikāram.*

# Chapter 111

## Trips to many different places

In the summer vacation of the year 1890 I set out for Teṉpāṇṭināṭu, to search for manuscripts of *Cilappatikāram.* Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar of Tiruvāvaṭuturai had issued instructions to the officials of the monastery's branches, announcing my coming, and ordering their full cooperation.

### Tirunelvēli

I first reached Tirunelvēli, where Kavirāja Īcuvara Mūrtti Piḷḷai was again very useful to me in my search for manuscripts in places I had not seen before. I also searched once more in the same places I had searched earlier. While I was engaged with *Pattuppāṭṭu*, all my attention had been directed towards that text alone. Now, my thoughts were naturally on *Cilappatikāram.* In Cālivāṭīcuvara Ōtuvār's house, I found one script with the plain text of *Cilappatikāram,* and a second with both text and commentary. The manuscript carrying the commentary was incomplete. Then I went and looked in the house of Tiruppāṟātaṉkaṭaṉ Kavirāyar, and in a few other places in Pāḷaiyaṅkōṭṭai. No *Cilappatikāram* copy was available. I intended to go to Srī Vaikuṇṭam and other villages. I learned that in the village of Peruṅkuḷam there was a monastery called Ceṅkōl Mutt and that its abbot was an expert in Tamil. I decided to go there and search. My friend, the lawyer A. Kirusṇacāmi Aiyar, informed about my intention, wrote a letter to this abbot, and gave it to me to take along.

## Srīvaikuṇṭam

At Srīvaikuṇṭam I visited first the home of a Kavirāyar. I found there Vaikunta Nātaṉ Kavirāyar, a man full eighty years old. While I was talking with him he quoted many ancient Tamil poems. I told him why I had come — to search for old manuscripts, and to find out whether there were any in his house. The old man laughed and said, "Are there really people these days interested in palmleaf manuscripts? Who would care about Tamil after the arrival of English education? Who would seek to preserve palmleaf books? It's all printed books nowadays!"

"But how did printed books originate?" I said. "It is because scholars like you have preserved palmleaf manuscripts that others see them and get them printed. Please, do permit me to have a look at the collection in your house."

"I indeed had a number of ancient palmleaf books. My boys received an English education and have left for their jobs. I thought, who's going now to preserve these manuscripts, and so I gave them all away to whoever asked for them."

I was full of regrets. "I should have come then!" The old man showed me the few manuscripts he still had for his own study. None of them was of any use to me.

## Peruṅkuḷam

I took leave of him and went to Peruṅkuḷam to Ceṅkōl Mutt where I saw the abbot. When I arrived he was playing the *Viṇāi*. He treated me in a very polite and friendly way. "We've heard that you're quite an expert in the *yamakam* form of poetry. Please do tell us a few." I was rather amazed to hear that a person who obviously enjoys music, the queen of all arts, and takes great pains to train in it, should also enjoy the verbal gymnastics of *yamakaṃ* and *tiripu*. But I had a lot to offer in that direction. I recited for him many stanzas from the *tiripu yamaka antatis* composed by Srī Miṉaṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai. I quoted complicated verses in the range of three upto thirteen syllables and explained the meaning. He listened and listened and was happy. When I told him why I had come, he gladly showed me all the manuscripts he had with him. These were mostly *pirapantams*, *purāṇams* as well as books already printed. There was one copy of the bare text of *Kuṟuntokai*.

I stayed there that whole day, engaged in interesting conversation with the abbot. He took me to the temple situated in the village, and described to me its memorable and special features. Thus I learned that Lord Siva's local manifestation goes under the name Ukkiravaḷutīcuvarar because it had been specially worshipped by the king ruling there, Ukkira Pāṇṭiyar. The abbot maintained that it was at that spot that the first public reading of the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* had taken place, in the gathering of the poets of the *Caṅkam* presided over by Nakkīraṛ, and, as a visible evidence of that ancient event, he showed me the statues of the 49 poets and an image of Ukkira Pāṇṭiyar adorning a spot in the temple. 'Whether it was here or elsewhere', I thought, 'it is praiseworthy that Tamilnadu worships its poets on *a par* with gods in a temple'.

## Āṟumukamaṅkalam

It was the help of Kumāracāmi Piḷḷai who lived at Āṟumukamaṅkalam, a village situated to the east of Peruṅkuḷam, who was the Tamil pandit at Tūttukkuṭi Caldwell College, that I had obtained manuscripts of the two books I was working on earlier — *Cintāmaṇi* and *Pattuppāṭṭu*. They were good and clean copies. I was hoping to find more valuable manuscripts in his house, and prompted by this hope I left Peruṅkuḷam and went to Āṟumukamaṅkalam. I found there Kumāracuvāmi Piḷḷai's son-in-law, Cuntaramūrtti Piḷḷai, who showed me the palmleaf scripts available in the house. There are many ancient palmleaf books there. I got a copy of *Akanāṉūṟu* and another of *Puṟanāṉūṟu* incomplete, and copies of the commentary on *Cilappatikaram* and of *Tamiḷ nāvalar carittiram.*

Cuntaramūrtti Piḷḷai arranged for my meals in a house of the Brahmin quarter of that village. I took my lunch there. I must say that the master of that house prepared a sumptuous feast for me. After I had eaten to my heart's content on that day, I remembered a little story connected with that village.

There lived a Brahmin scholar once by name of Aṇṭāṉ Kaviryar who came one day to Āṟumukamaṅkalam. Āṟumukamaṅkalam was a large village. In former times the place is said to contain one thousand and eight Brahmin houses, and one of them, it was maintained, was inhabited by god Vināyaka the elephant-headed. He was called there 'Vinyaka of 1008'.

For some reason, Aṇṭāṉ Kavirāyar could not get anything to eat there to appease his hunger — and that in such a large village! This particular scholar was famous for his satirical verses — they even called him 'latter-days Kāḷamēkam'. Tortured by unsatisfied hunger, he cursed the village with the words, 'Whenever anyone of you goes to Āṟumukamṅkalam, take your food with you! Shame, shame I say!' And he added a few satirical stanzas.

The feast I was offered in that village was a straight denial of that story. I remarked to someone, "Aṇṭāṉ Kavirāyar had spoken about this village in disparagement. But I have tasted here delicacies which I had never eaten before!" That person, who was also a guest at the meal, offered the following explanation: "Yes. That's because it has become a custom to offer a very special feast to everyone who comes visiting this place — in order to counterbalance the curse and the ridicule expressed by the poet!"

## The Tamil thrown in water

From Āṟumukamaṇkalam I went to Tiruccentūr, worshipped the Lord of Centil there, and proceeded to Āḻvār Tirunakari and after searching for manuscripts in a few places, returned to Tirunelvēli. Having been told that there may be a few palm-leaf books in the possession of lawyer Cuppaiyā Piḷḷai of New South Street, I paid a visit to him. Srī Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar's brother, Tirikūṭa Rācappa Kavirāyar, who was a friend of mine, was also there. He was Cuppaiyā Piḷḷai's relative. When I said why I have come, Kavirāyar, too, explained to Cuppaiyā Piḷḷai the purpose of my search.

"We had in our house cartloads of palmleaf manuscripts that had belonged to our teacher from Ūrkkāṭu. They were all old, dilapidated, falling apart — simply of no use. They only took up plenty of space and no one was interested in them, so I thought of how to dispose of them. I had never the skill to open them and to read them, actually. I came to look upon them as so much unwanted rubbish — in our time when we've witnessed the emergence of beautifully printed volumes! A few old women suggested that they might be set adrift in a river, piling them up to look like a temple car, as people used to do on the 18th of the month of Āṭi. They said this was in a proper tradition. So, on an eighteenth of Āṭi, I got rid of the whole lot of them in the canal." As he was telling me this, he did not show the slightest regret. What he said has wrung my heart. I felt the same despair as when I heard in Karivalam vanta Nallūr of the deliberate burning of the palm-leaf manuscripts. A few great men of old who sang the praises of the greatness of Tamil maintained that it could not be destroyed by fire nor drowned in water. They did not live to see the utter disregard for the same Tamil, which was being today thrown into fire and made to disappear in canals. We stand by, helpless, in despair.

I asked him in my sorrow, "You're telling me that you let all those manuscripts that had been kept in your house for ages — that you let them be carried off by flood. Do you think you did the right thing?"

Tirikūṭa Rācappa Kavirāyar interrupted me saying, "I happened to come here at the time when these people were flinging bundles of palm-leaf books into the canal for the last time. I saw it! I saw one final batch of palm leaves in the hands of a boy hurrying away with it, I slapped him across the face, and snatched it now?" This he said addressing the master of the house.

The bundle was brought and placed before me. As rats had already taken it up for research before me, many of the leaves were just in bits and pieces. They were fragments of short *pirapantam* like *Tiruppūvaṇa Nātarulā*. But there were pieces here and there of *Cilappatikāram* too! I picked them up and scrutinized them. The writing was clear and free of mistakes. I looked at it for a long time, unable to tear myself off, with my heart in complete desperation, thinking of that what was now beyond my reach.

### 'Ciṟappatikāram'

Taking Tirikūṭa Rācappa Kavirāyar with me, I proceeded from Tirunelvēli to Ampācamuttiram. In a village on our way stopped in the house of a Saiva guru, a spiritual preceptor. On seeing us approach, even from a great distance, the guru disappeared inside the house. He must have been about seventy years of age. One of his sons received us. He went in, brought out two planks to be used as seats placing one on the floor of the veranda and leaning the other against the wall. When a seat was thus arranged, the old man appeared. He had jewels — *āṟukaṭṭi* and *cuntaravēṭam* — in his ears, string of *rudrākṣa* beads round his brow, and a similar string, with a pendant in gold, round his neck. Coming outside and assuming his seat on the plank he said, "Welcome." Apparently he could not appear before others like any other common mortal, unless he would assume all that ornamental dignity! He was a man well known to my companion, Tirikūṭa Rācappa Kavirāyar, and indebted to him for some help.

We sat down on the veranda. He said: "Why have you come? Distinguished people like you often grace my dwelling with their exalted presence. I do not deserve so much honour. What is the purpose of your arrival?"

I heard you had some palmleaf manuscripts. I have come to have a look at them," I said.

He asked, "Is that so? What particular script do you require?"

I said, "I need the *Cilappatikāram.*"

"The *Ciṟappatikāram?* I've got it," he said, correcting my 'mistake'.

"It's not *Ciṟappatikaram*. It is *Cilappatikāram,*" said I, in vehement disagreement.

"The only proper name of it is *Ciṟappatikāram!* You're just a child. What can you know!" Kavirāyar brushed that aside and said, "Let it be; please, ask them to bring the book."

"It is such an easy matter? just to take it out and put it on display? Touch it just like that? We should first worship Sarasvatī, the Goddess of Learning, in a proper *pūjā*, and then only take it into our hands."

The way he talked made me guess he had in fact nothing to show. But Kavirāyar did not leave it at that. As he had once been of some help to the old man, he called his boy, went inside, and said in a strict voice of authority, "Show me that book, will you?" He brought the scripts. There were all in all some ten to fifteen manuscripts; they were all Agamas and treatises dealing with funeral practices. We took leave without uttering a word.

## Nāṅkunēri

Then I went to Nāṅkuṉēri where I searched in the Vāṉamāmalai Mutt. All manuscripts there were in Sanskrit. There was just one single Tamil manuscript; and that was the *Naiṭatam*. I searched in many houses in the hope I might discover the *Takaṭūr Yāttirai*. I haven't. I went to the house of a person by name of Kaṇakku Tātar. He had removed from a number of palmleaf scrolls the ropes, and I found a number of manuscripts bound with one single rope. For this person, a rope was of more importance than a number of ancient books on palm leaves. Account books were mixed in one heap with leaves of *Kamparāmāyaṇam*. So, I got at least Kampar's epic there in lose.

## Kaḷakkāṭu

From Nāṅkuṉēri I went to Kaḷakkāṭu. There are two Saivite monasteries in that place. I went to the Southern Mutt. Its Head, Cāmināta Tēcikar, was a man of excellent learning and character. When I informed him of my errand, he brought a ladder, climbed into the attic, and placed before me all his manuscripts. I looked at all of them; there were many *pirapantams*, *puranams* and Sanskrit texts. Some of them were without names. I filled in the names of these.

I came upon an old manuscript there that contained the whole of the underlying text of *Pattuppāṭṭu!* I was immersed in a sea of rapture. "I have been wandering because of this in innumerable places!" I exclaimed. "If I had got it earlier, how lucky I could have been! Even now I can use it for my second edition." So saying I received the book from my host.

Because of the great joy of this discovery I stayed on there yet another day too. I went on that day to the local temple and worshipped the deity known as Cattiyavākīcar. In the great *maṇṭapam* are pillars with 21 beams. Someone stroke the 21 beams one by one, and to my amazement I heard the 21 tones in all the three scales, one by one. Māṇikkavācakar says somewhere in his poem, "Knowledge will make a stone as soft as a ripe fruit." I saw there indeed skill and art making stone as pliable as a string of an instrument, and I was enchanted. They told me that the temple was built by Vīramārttāṇṭa Pāṇṭiyar.

Then I packed all my finds and returned to Kumpakōṇam via Tirunelvēli.

# Chapter 112

# A Temple to Tamil

As soon as I have returned to Kumpakōṇam, I took up all the copies of *Cilappatikāram* I had with me, and began to research them. I devoted all the attention I could separately and in due order to the three components of the book — the text as such, Aṭiyārkkunallār's commentary, and the old glossary of difficult expressions. As, however, the glossary was on a copy of extremely damaged condition, it was not at all easy to study it properly and in full. I had certain regard for it, not because of the manuscript copy I had before me, but because Aṭiyārkkunallār quoted it as an authority in certain contexts. However, when I paid a more leisurely and closer attention to it, I found some valuable data in it which could not be found in Aṭiyarkkunallār's commentary as such. Seeing such data made me study the glossary of rare terms with more interest and in more detail.

## References to music and drama

*Cilappatikāram* is replete with data referring to music and drama. When I tried to organize them systematically, I was amazed at the large number of rules and poetical works quoted by Aṭiyārkkunallār. *Caccapuṭa veṇpā*, *Tāḷa camuttiram*, *Cuttānanta pirakācam* — these books I had. And I studied them. Whenever I met Makā Vaittiyanātaiyar and his brother Vaiyai Irāmacuvm̄i Aiyar I reported to them what I had found in *Cilappatikāram* itself, and in these three works, bearing on music. They clarified for me certain doubtful points. They were also surprised: "Are there so many treatises on music in Tamil?" There was at Kumpakōṇam a person well-versed in Bharata Natyam by name of Naṭēca Tīkṣitar. I have gathered some information from him concerning *abhinaya* expressions, the gestures of the hands, and other similar matters. I have also gathered many data from a Rāyar, who lived in that town, too, and was a past master of *Bharatasāstra*. I approached a few dance-masters, and they gladly offered much information. But I felt great sadness: Why have the Tamils failed to preserve properly such arts and the treatises dealing with them! With all the assistance thus obtained, I still could not throw full light on all the details to be found in the commentary. Aiyacāmi Cāstirikaḷ, the Tahsildar of Kumpakōṇam, explained to me points dealing with Yoga and allied matters.

### Professor Julien Vinson

While I was thus engaged in my research in *Cilappatikāram*, I got, in April 1891, a letter from Paris. It was from a French savant, Julien Vinson, who was a professor of Tamil in Paris, and saw my edition of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. He wrote how much he enjoyed the reading of the *Cintāmaṇi*, and prompted me to publish the other four epics, including *Cilappatikāram*. His letter revealed his love of the Tamil language and his politeness. He concluded with the words,

> "I shall be very pleased if you will kindly read my faulty Tamil and write me a reply. Praying to God to shower His blessings on you,
>
> I remain,
> Your colleague and servant."

In spite of the wide seas separating us we became friends, since, as the adage says, "It is the sincerity of feeling that makes true friendship." I wrote to him, asking if a copy of *Cilappatikāram* was available in any Paris library. He replied by return. In his answer dated 7th May, 1891, he said, "I happen to know well all the one thousand Tamil paper manuscripts preserved in our large Bibiliotheque Nationale. A reference to that list or catalogue shows that no *Cilappatikāram* is in stock. As for ancient classics, though, there is a paper manuscript copy of *Maṇimēkalai* in that library. But as I informed you in my letter written last month, many words and stanzas are missing in that copy. Also, there is only the bare text in that copy, and no commentary. It is a palmleaf copy. I made a copy of it on paper, to keep in my own small library. Therefore, if you wish to see it, I shall send you that paper copy. You may return it to me after filling in the missing stanzas and words." My wonder and admiration increased greatly when I thought of the care bestowed on the preservation of the jewels belonging to our Mother Tamil at a place many thousand of miles away, while the people in Tamilnadu itself let their inherited treasures of books on palm leaves to be destroyed by fire and flood, to my grief and pain. Hearing of the thousand Tamil manuscripts stored in the library at Paris, I thought, 'Even if my fellow-countrymen were to lose all of their own manuscripts, those other thousand scripts at least would be well taken care of.' As I was also studying *Maṇimēkalai* from time to time inbetween I wrote to my friend in Paris to send me copies of certain parts of it. He did so. Since I found it full of mistakes I stopped giving him further trouble.

### Tirupperunturai

In May 1891, the ceremony of *upanayanam* took place for my son Ciranclvi Kaliyāṇacuntaram. At the same time, Kaṇṇappat Tamipirān, the Head of the Mutt at Tirupperunturai, arranged for a magnificent *Kumbhābhiṣeka* consecration ceremony of the temple there. Although I was invited by the Head of Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt to participate. I could not, since I had to take care of all the arrangements of my son's *upanayanam.* Still, after the *upanayanam* was over, I went to Tirupperunturai and worshipped. I went to the library attached to the temple, where there were few manuscripts. But there was nothing which I could use.

### Kunrakkuṭi

From Tirupperunturai I went to Kunrakkuṭi and met there the Head of the Mutt as well as my friend Arumuka Tēcikar who was his Junior. I also reminded the head clerk of the Mutt, Appāp Piḷḷai, of the request I had made him in a letter to let me know of places where palmleaf manuscripts could be found. "Wait a moment", he said, went inside, and brought a manuscript for me. I unfolded it and looked into it. It contained the bare texts of both *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai.* I turned the leaves of the *Cilappatikāram;* the text was complete; the copy was entirely free of mistakes.

"Where did you get this manuscript?" I asked.

"In a village not far from here, Mutalaippaṭṭi, there is a house of a Kavirāyar. He has hundreds of such manuscripts. I got it from him", said Appā Piḷḷai.

"Mutalaippaṭṭi? Isn't it a rather strange name?" I asked and he replied, "They call it Mutalaippaṭṭi now; the proper name Mitilaippaṭṭi has changed in the spoken language like that."

I felt like starting for that village at once.

"How far is that place from here?"

He understood how eager I was to go, and said, "Oh, quite near. We can go now."

### Mitilaippaṭṭi

In the afternoon of that day I got the permission of the Head of the monastery, went to Mitilaippaṭṭi taking Appāp Piḷḷai along, and entered the house of that Kavirāyar. His name was Aḷakiya Cirrampalak Kavirāyar. I met him and talked to him. I saw the manuscripts preserved in his house. His house looked like a temple raised in honour of the Goddess Tamil. The Kavirāyar recounted the greatness of his ancestors, and recited for us a number of poems composed by them.

His ancestors lived previously in a village in the vicinity of Cēlam. At that time they were under the protection of Kaṭṭiyappa Mutaliyār who was connected with the renovation of Tāramaṅkalam Temple. An ancestor of the family, also by name of Cirramapalak Kavirāyar, received the village of Mitilaippaṭṭi as a donation from a Zamindar called Veṅkaḷappa Nāyakkar. They had made their residence there, ever since.

Poets of his line had received many gifts from the Cētupatis of Irāmanātapuram, from the Zamindars of Maruṅkāpuri, from the Zamindars of Civakaṅkai, and from the Rajahs of Putukkōṭṭai.

The Kavirāyar, showing us two objects of interest, said, "Our ancestors used to receive elephants as presents; this is the block of stones to which they tied their elephants. They were entitled to ride in a palanquiṇ. There it is, reminding us of our ancient glory." He added, "Our ancestors composed innumerable *pirapantams.* They have obtained countless gifts. Now we enjoy the wealth they have accumulated. But I do not have either the knowledge of Tamil they had or their power of expression. A cousin of mine, Kumāracāmik Kavirāyar, lives in that house to the west. He *is* a good scholar." Although he spoke like this in his modesty, he was in fact learned in Tamil. He could also to some extent compose verses of his own having inherited the skill from his ancestors. A few elderly people who belonged to the same family shared that skill to a greater extent.

Every manuscript in their house was very well written. On the top of one palmleaf scroll was the title Commentary on *Puṟanāṉūṟu* and Commentary on *Cilappatikāram.* It filled me with the same boundless joy as if a blind man were suddenly able to see. I took it up, opened it and looked. There was only the *Puṟanāṉūṟu;* no commentary on *Cilappatikāram.* I rummaged endlessly among the whole collection, hoping to find it mixed with some other scripts. In vain. 'Just my ill-luck' I told myself in disappointment.

I found a script with the title *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟ Payakara Mālai* (Fear-quenching Garland of Sacred Sports). I had once read a little book, published with many misprints, entitled 'Tiruviḷaiyāṭar Payaṅkara Mālai' — 'The Terrifying Garland of Sacred Sports'. At that time I did not at all understand why that garland of verses would be 'terrifying'. As soon as I saw the title of the script found at Mitilaippaṭṭi, *Payakaramālai,* the thing became as clear as day: What was meant was, of course, the Sanskrit *bhaya-hara-,* in Tamil, *paya-kara,* i.e. 'fear-removing, fear-quenching', and not *payaṅkara* 'fear-producing, terrifying'! I had a good laugh. The manuscript copy said that its author was a Vīrappattirak Kampar. I could not bring myself to leave that house. I asked Ciṟṟampalak Kavirāyar, "Please tell me if there are in this neighbourhood any other places where one could get hold of palmleaf scripts." He said, "We have relatives of ours living here nearby in Cevvūr. A branch of our lineage has moved over there. You may see manuscripts like these there too. Another such branch is to be found in Kāraiccūrāṉpaṭṭi. But this being the middle of the summer you cannot stand a trip to that village." I felt as pleased as if someone had revealed to me the place of a burried treasure; I was so happy.

I received from Kavirāyar *Puṟanāṉūṟu,* the *Payakaramālai,* the three *ulā* poems and a few other works, and I proceeded to Cevvūr. The founder of that branch of the family was Ciṟṟampalak Kavirāyar, author of *Taḷaciṅkamālai,* a *pirapantam* in honour of a Cētupati. In that house, too, there were many manuscripts. However, a copy of *Cilappatikāram* was not to be found. On one of the manuscripts there was a long poem in the *akaval* metre describing the history of the three *Caṅkams.* I read and copied it. During this trip we had many lively conversations with Appā Piḷḷai. He was able to talk in double entendres and puns in a very amusing way, so that one forgot even the flow of time.

## The fame of Marutapāṇṭiyar

From Cevvūr I went to Kuṉṟakkuṭi and I told the Head of the Mutt all about the excellence of Mitilaippaṭṭi. Subsequently I went to Ciṟuvayal, in order to see the local Zamindar, Mutturāmaliṅkat Tēvar. He had urged me often to come and visit him. He had an unusual affection and high esteem for music, Tamil and Sanskrit. In addition, he was well-versed in Telugu. He had with him two court-scholars, the Tamil vittuvāṉ Irāmaliṅka Piḷḷai, and the Sanskrit pandit Tirukkōṣṭiyūr Cāmināta Cāstirikaḷ.

The Zamindar was genuinely pleased at my arrival, and extended to me great courtesy. The folk living in villages around Kuṉṟakkuṭi praised to high heavens the liberality and courage of Maruta Pāṇṭiyar, and composed about him songs which they sang with great gusto.

The Zamindar of Ciṟuvayal had also many stories to tell. "This manor which I now own used to be Maruta Pāṇṭiyar's palace. That's why this village is called Araṇmaṉaic Ciṟuvayal. Only few among the Civakaṅkai princes have earned so much fame as he had. He has earned his position and title by his courage and heroism. He was also a very pious man, and established special worship in many temples. Above all he built several halls in Kuṉṟakkuṭi. The temple tank by name Marutāpuri, famous and lovely even today, was renovated on his order. There were twentyone Tamil *Vittuvāṉs* at his court. They have composed many stanzas in his praise." The Zamindar, obviously overwhelmed by Maruta Pāṇṭiyar's learning, liberality, and heroism, would repeat his praises almost incessantly. Informed that I was about to publish and print the *Cilappatikāram*, he promised all possible material help he could offer, and in addition told me that I can borrow his court-scholar — Tirumāṉūrk Kiruṣṇaiyar sent by me, — whenever I would need him to assist me.

I took leave of him and returned to Kumpakōṇam, taking with me the manuscripts I had been able to obtain in Mitilaippaṭṭi and Cevvūr.

I was able, with the help of the Mitilaippaṭṭi manuscript, to correct a number of readings in the *Cilappatikāram*. It provided headings for many of the songs. As I was constantly studying that manuscript I realized its excellence and was praising Mitilaippaṭṭi ever more. I felt certain that research in *Maṇimēkalai* done inbetween would also yield many correct readings. But I postponed it to a later date and concentrated fully on *Cilappatikāram*. If I had not made that trip to Mitilaippaṭṭi, I could not have found the peace of mind I needed in my tense state. Later it was with this thought that I wrote about Mitilaippaṭṭi, "There are plenty of holy temples in Tamilnadu. There are many temples to Siva, to Viṣṇu, to Subrahmaṇya. I place it on a par with these Mitilaippaṭṭi which certainly is one of the spots to contain a temple to the Goddess of Tamil."[1]

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[1] See the eighth essay *Paramparaikkunam* in my book *Nāṉ Kaṇṭatum Kēṭṭatum*.

# Chapter 113

## Hirutayālaya Marutappat Tēvar

## A New Home

As the scope of my research kept expanding, my 'Tamil family' increased, and so did the treasure of my Tamil books. A necessity arose for a fit dwelling to guard it. In the house I was living there was not enough space to store the ever-increasing stock of palm leaves and to study them with the participation of my friends. So, in June 1891, we moved to a house with two floors, at the northern tip of the same Paktapuri Akkirakāram, which we rented for six rupees per month.

As soon as we moved into our new home my hopes sored that I might now go on collecting useful manuscripts, teach more pupils, and engage in Tamil research with many to assist me.

At the time when my son's *upanayanam* was celebrated, I was offered help by a number of influential gentlemen. One of them was the Zamindar of Ūṟṟumalai, Hirutayālaya Marutappat Tēvar. For many days I had wished for a closer acquaintance with him. But whenever I toured the Tirunelvēli region, I was unable to go to Uṟṟumalai and see him as I wished to. I decided I could never fulfil my wish unless I set out again with Uṟṟumalai as my main goal. Therefore, several days after I had returned from Mitilaippaṭṭi, I set out for Uṟṟumalai as my destination.

### Vikkiramaciṅkapuram

At the same time, though, I started on my trip with the intention to go and hunt for palm leaves at places I had not been to before. Hence I went straight to Vikkiramaciṅkapuram. There is the native house there of Srī Civañāṉa Muṉivar of Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai who wrote the *Tirāviṭa Makāpāṣyam* commentary on *Civañāṉapōtam*. I thought I could find there some manuscripts which I could use. I went there, looked, but discovered nothing.

I met, in that house, the teacher of the local school. When I asked him what was his native place, he answered, "Kaṭaiyanallūr."

"Is that so?" I said. "I'm glad to hear it. Do you happen to have in your house any old Tamil palmleaf manuscripts?"

### Much ado about nothing

"There were plenty", he said, "but a certain person has taken them all away."

I asked, very eager to know, "Who was it?"

"Cāminātaiyar of Kumpakōṇam! He's made away with all of them!" I suppressed my laughter as best as I could.

"What were the books that he carried away?"

"A lot of manuscripts! He did not leave anything behind!"

It was obvious that he did not know who I was. The friends who had come with me were standing there, eyes wide open with amazement, comprehending nothing. I was plying him with question after question, to find out how far he would go in his scandalous report. He stuck to his assertion that there had been many rare manuscripts in his house, and that I had taken them all away. I could not suppress my merriment. I began to speak, so that my friends would get the facts straight.

"This gentleman accuses me without any reason and stirs up a scandal without substance, and yet he doesn't even know me! It is true I had been to Kaṭaiyanallūr. It is also a fact that I have tried to search for manuscript books in his house, apparently. But I certainly have not seen there innumerable manuscripts as he mentions. As soon as I reached that village, I was told that his house belonged to a great scholar, so I went there to enquire. The person I met there simply told me that all the manuscripts were stored in the loft. I climbed up and looked. I found two or three boxes. As soon as I saw them it was obvious to me that they had been there uncared of for ages. I opened a box, placed my hand in it — and all I found were mice droppings, a lot of it. There were only a few bits left over, of palm leaves, sticking to the droppings, after the mice had eaten and digested them. When I emptied the boxes cleaning them of their contents, knocking out bits and pieces of the damaged palm leaves, I saw that all I got was one incomplete script of *Cintāmaṇi*, and I took it up. What would I do with the other treasures stored in those boxes! This is the whole truth of the matter!"

When I finished, I turned to the teacher and asked him, "Were you there at that time?"

With a fallen face he answered, "I didn't know all this. I shouldn't have said what I did. I wasn't there at the time. When I went home for holidays, that was what the people there told me."

"Fortunately!" I said. "As you stirred up this slander in my face, the truth has come out, and everyone knows it. If you had told this to anyone else, they could have taken it for truth. Well, I have survived it."

I engaged a cart then to take me from Vikkiramaciṅkapuram to Uṟṟumalai.

## His appearance

As the cart approached Uṟṟumalai, a small body of armed men marched on the road towards us. On seeing this one of my companions said, "Look, there comes the Zamindar!" I halted the cart at once and stepped down.

As I alighted I heard a deep and sonorous voice saying, "Very pleased to meet you. I'm coming this way only to welcome you." I looked up. He stood in front of me attired like a huntsman. I looked around. The Maṟavar, armed natives of the area, were standing around him with the air of deep respect. There were also many hunting dogs. 'Is it indeed to welcome me that he has come in this hunting attire? Doesn't he rather look like some warrior of old?' My eyes tried to size him up, head to foot. He might have been then over fifty years old.

"Why take so much trouble?" I said, smiling with delight. "I could have waited upon you in the palace itself!"

"I have been looking forward to your visit every day since you wrote to me. Please proceed straight to the palace. I shall join you there after having covered a short distance this way," he said, and continued marching on.

I reached the palace. I found most comfortable arrangements made for my stay on the floor above the main gate. A bath was prepared at once. Then I got a snack with coffee. Having finished all that, I went, at eight o' clock, to the audience hall. As I entered, the Zamindar rose from his seat, and asked me politely to sit down. There were four scholars with him. I remember the names of only two of them — Muttuvīrap Pulavar and Aṇṇāmalai Pulavar. I sat down.

### The study of Tamil

The Zamindar was engaged with those four scholars in the study of *Tiruvāṉaikkāp Purāṇam*. He sometimes used to write to me asking me to explain the meaning of a Tamil stanza here and there. And I used to wonder, since those poems were difficult and not to be easily understood by those who had not made a special study of them, 'Why does a Zamindar choose such difficult stanzas and then refer them to me? Does he really read such works and has he understood all the other verses in those poems?' I could assess the measure of his achievement in Tamil now, as I saw him enjoying the delight of reading poetry right in the company of Tamil scholars.

One of the scholars read out a stanza. At once, Marutappat Tēvar turned to me and said, "Your commands are awaited." I was stunned. The reason was the unusual courtesy and politeness of his words and tone.

Tiruvaḷḷuvar has written,

*ellārkkum naṉṟām paṇital avaruḷḷum*
*celvarkkē celvan takaittu*’’

"Humility is good for all; but especially in the rich it is a welcome treasure."

The Zamindar was a living illustration of these words. Who was I his teacher? Was I at atleast his elder in age? The words he had used, 'Your commands are awaited', manifested his large-heartedness, his boundless love of Tamil. 'Would those princes of ancient times, famous for their courage, generosity and learning, look perhaps like this admirable man!' I thought, praising him highly in my heart. I began to give the meaning of that stanza. What limits would there be to my enthusiasm when I had been given such a time, such a place, and that kind of connoisseurs? I mentioned the theme, gave word-for-word meaning, a comment on some special points, and analyzed the structure of the piece in terms of the five divisions of grammar. The Zamindar listened sitting immovable like a statue. Two more stanzas followed. The clock struck ten. The Zamindar put the book down and got up. "Today I have tasted delight of a kind I have never experienced before. It is time now. We should go and have dinner," said he with utmost courtesy.

I enjoyed the midday feast together with the nectar of Tamil which accompanied it. Everything I saw there was a feast for the eyes. The men I met there and the officials who looked after business matters were perfectly correct in behaviour. Everything moved like clock-work, punctual and faultless. A sand-glass had been placed at the main gate to indicate the time. There was no spot there that would not be spick and span. Most of the palace staff were well versed in Tamil.

## How he spent his time

I admired the way how Hirutayālaya Marutappat Tēvar spent his time. He rose at four in the morning. Having finsihed his morning obligations, he drunk just a glass of milk, and at six he went out for a walk, accompanied by his retinue. He would inspect the elephant-herd, the horse-stables, the cattle-sheds. Then he would go for a walk along each of the roads around the village. These roads were all laid by him; he had planned them very neatly, with trees planted on both edges. The gardens were luscious and well cared for. When he returned from his rounds, between eight and ten, he would sit with the Tamil scholars, studying Tamil literature. He used to study something new every day, and at the same time take delight in reviewing many times what he had already studied before. His scholars came from families noted for scholarship for generations; they were themselves authors of several *pirapantams;* they had been court poets for quite a few years. After ten, the Zamindar went to his office, to attend to the affairs of his estate. Bath, dinner, and other activities would be finished, and by two o'clock he would again sit down to take up the study of Tamil literary works. He would finish at four, and till six he would supervise works connected with the estate. After six, he would grant audience to those who came to see him. He would listen to the complaints his retainers would bring him. They would also hand over petitions written on palmleaves. He would study all of them later, and next day give his opinion. Everyone who came from places outside his domain would be treated with spotless courtesy.

## The temple

In the evenings he used to go to the temple. It was a temple for Navanīta Kṛṣṇasvāmi. Under the rule of Hirutayālaya Marutappat Tēvar, both daily and occasional worship in the temple was splendidly performed. Navanīta Kṛṣṇar was the family deity of the Zamindar. Although the shrine was small, the ceremonies were worthy of the largest temples. The main deity received, as food offerings, a rich variety of victuals — *lāṭu, laṭṭu, jilēbi tēṅkuḻal,* and so on and so forth. All these foods were made with the best clarified butter. A *lāṭu* was usually of the size of a coconut with the fibre removed. The Tēṅkuḻal would be as large as a big sandalstone. It was the custom of the Zamindar to distribute these *precātams* to the guests who came from outside his dominions.

Marutappat Tēvar would go far a regular darshan of the Lord every evening. Several professional musicians would sing in the temple the proper hymns.

I have seen nowhere else such orderly and efficient sovereign administration as that which he performed. Although his domain, his *zamīn,* was small, he has endowed it with prestige owing to his able rule. I used to imagine the many benefits a large country might obtain if he were its sovereign ruler.

## Civilities and respects

I met the Zamindar at four in the afternoon. We two drank the delights of Tamil poetry. I spoke to him with enthusiasm of ancient books as well as of new. I admired with great pleasure the Zamindar's keen knowledge of Tamil. He would never speak ill of anyone. Tamil manuscripts, belonging to the Zamindar's father-in-law, Periyacāmit Tēvar, were stored in the place. I had a look at them. None of them was of any use to me. Bathing in the Cittirā River, partaking of the most tasty meals, listening to the Zamindar's talk, which came straight from the heart drenched in affection, the sweetness of Tamil I enjoyed there — all this together made my study of a few days there like a sojourn in heavenly Paradise. The respect, civility and entertainment I received there was indeed royal; and I do mean royal. The only shortcoming in the situation was that I was not myself a king.

## Adieu

Even if I chose to stay there for the rest of my days, life would never become stale to me; nor would the Zamindar diminish his polite hospitability. Would it be possible? My duty lay elsewhere — my profession, and my endless wandering from place to place in search of Tamil manuscripts. One day, suppressing my great sadness at the necessity of parting, I took leave of the Zamindar, composing for him a decade of stanzas.

All I can remember now is the fragment of a line, ...*oruvañcik kāṇṭan tēkāt, tāralava vīra ṭēraḷapū pāla viṭai taruvāy manṉō.* "... Please did me leave, [1]Vīrakēraḷa Pūpāla..." He said I should stay for a few more days. When I insisted that, unfortunately, since there is no other possibility, he gave graciously his permission for me to leave, sending me on with a shawl, a few excellent pieces of cloth, and money for travelling expenses.

And thus, one evening, I said goodbye to him. He told me then, "I shall get you a carriage, equipped with a cook, cooking utensils and foodstuffs. You can use it everywhere — wherever you have to go."

I answered, "That is quite impossible. There won't be facilities in the places I go to for a cook to prepare feast after feast for me. In many places I just eat whatever I can get, and then hunt for manuscripts. It also happens that I have to go without food altogether. When I have to cope with such conditions, I could not pursue my aim if I had to take with me a whole retinue, a carriage, bullocks, a driver, a cook and all that. It will be enough if you kindly arrange for a cart to take me up to Tirukkuṟṟālam." He agreed to do so. It was decided that I would leave next day early in the morning.

After having obtained permission to leave I returned to my lodgings. At ten that night an attendant brought me, as usual, thick, well-boiled milk. As I drank the beverage boiled down to the consistence of excellent gruel sweetened with honey-like sugar-cane and flavoured with saffron, I thought, 'Where else shall I find such genuine solicitude! How can I tear myself away from a man of so much affection?', and tears in large drops were falling down my cheeks.

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[1] Virakēraḷamputūr is the town where the Zamindar lived.

I got up next day at dawn. The carriage was ready. I felt like going to see the Zamindar once more. So I went. When he saw me he was shocked: "What is the matter? Hasn't the carriage arrived?" he asked.

"Everything is ready. My heart is not ready to part from your lordship. I am being dragged away in the service of Tamil. As I tasted in the night the usual cup of milk my heart melted at the thought of the love your lordship bears for me. I came because of the desire to take leave of you once more again. Shall I go now?"

"We are also grieved at the parting," he said with genuine affection. "Whenever you happen to be free, you may drop in here, stay with us, and pour for us the nectar of Tamil."

I took leave of him and went. That was the last time I saw him; Fate decided I should not meet him again.

I left my heart behind, with Hirutayālaya Marutappat Tēvar, and reached Tirukkuṟṟālam.

## Chapter 114

## The printing of Cilappatikāram

As I came to Tirukkuṟṟālam, Tirikūṭa Rācappak Kavirāyar came there from Mēlakaram. As soon as I saw him, I felt my courage rising — knowing that I'll be able to go to many villages in that region in the search of old scripts again. "I've been to Uṟṟumalai. As soon as I'm back in Kumpakōṇam I must arrange for the printing of *Cilappatikāram*. But before that I plan to look for scripts in a few places, with your assistance", I said.

He said, "Let's do so."

### Manuscripts of *pirapantams*

I went with him to places like Cokkampaṭṭi and many other villages. I rummaged in the houses here and there of a number of scholars. I felt sad seeing most of these scholars reduced to poverty. I also saw some charitable institutions founded by the Zamindars of old. In some places I met people who were able to tell ancient stories about abbots, monks and savants of by-gone days. I heard many anecdotes about the shrewdness of Poṉṉampalam Piḷḷai, at one time a minister of Cakkampaṭṭi Zamīn.

Subsequently I went to Vācutēvanallūr, Puḷiyaṅkuṭi, and other villages, and continued my search for old books. There was a large community of scholars living in Puḷiyaṅkuṭi. They said that the ancient name of the place was Pūḻiyaṉ

Kuṭi. I talked to those scholars, and they were able to quote many ancient poems. They showed me gladly old manuscripts which they had with them. They were all *pirapantams*, just that : *paḷḷu, kuṟavañci, kuḷuva nāṭakam, kātal, muḷaippāṭṭu, vitaippāṭṭu, tirumuka vilācam*, and the like. At that time I was really not interested in them. Court poets composed such *pirapantams* in order to please the taste of Zamindars, when Tamil learning and noble, great poetry was at a low ebb, and earned thus various favours. These authors were not interested in following the model of great epics and the traditions and values of classical poetry. What was most conspicuous about those *pirapantams* was the piling up of words and strong eroticism.

## The events at Teṉkāci

I then reached Teṉkāci. There I went to a Mutt in which had lived a teacher of Ativīrarāma Pāṇṭiyar, the author of *Naiṭatam* and other pieces. I searched in that place, too. I found nothing there that I could use. In one of the houses I met a gentleman by name of Cuppaiyā Piḷḷai. He told me that he knew by heart a few old poems, and he recited the following stanza,

*uḷḷār kollō tōḻi ciḷḷeṉap*
*paruntuvīḷn teṭutta payntalai yaravam*
*kātaṟu kavaṇa tēykkum*
*tītaṟu kaḷḷiyaṅ kāṭiṟan tōrē*

"Has my true love not seen, o friend,
picking his frightening path through the desert scrub,
the hawk fall like a thunderbolt to grip
in vice-like talons the hooded cobra,
and fly away — and make it seem
a sling with the thong torn loose?"

From the style it seemed to me that it could be a *Caṅkam* poem.

"Where did you get this from?"

"There were many pieces like this in the palmleaves I had with me."

"So? May I see those palmleaf scripts?"

"My house is no longer in my possession. My palmleaves, along with my other property, are in other people's hands."

By now I had got used to expect to see something with high hopes, and to have those high hopes smashed next moment. The stanzas Cuppaiyā Piḷḷai had recited, and the information he had given me at first, had led me to expect, with great eagerness, to see a book I had never seen before. When I learned then that he had lost everything because he had got into debts, and that therefore he had to lie low, I felt very sorry indeed. I was not so much worried by the fact that he had lost his property as by the unfortunate circumstance that he had lost the treasure of Tamil poetry.

"Does it mean that you haven't got even a single manuscript now?" I asked and my voice was faint with apprehension.

"I happen to have just a few stray leaves and one or two books."

When I asked him whether he could show them to me he stated, "I have kept them in the loft of another house. I cannot go there and get them during day-time; I'll bring them at night."

That night I got from him the stray palm leaves. I found six stanzas in them.

I guessed that they could form part of an ancient text called *Ciṟṟaṭṭakam*. Until this day I have not been able to obtain that book.

Although those palm leaves were few and stray, I felt as pleased as if I had obtained a large book, and I praised Cuppaiyā Piḷḷai, and took leave of him. From Teṉkāci I toured a few other villages, looked around, and have found nothing useful for my edition of *Cilappatikāram*. So, I said goodbye to Tirikūṭa Ṛācappa Kavirāyar and returned to Kumpakōṇam.

The hard work and the travail I had to endure to remove the lacunae in Aṭiyārkkunallār's commentary which I undertook was no small matter. I made a trip to more than fifty towns and villages. I had met with nothing but failure. I decided to stop that kind of traveling, and get *Cilappatikāram* to the press as soon as possible. I wrote to the Ẕamindar of Ciṟuvayal at once, and requested the presence of Tirumāṉūrk Kiruṣṇaiyar in Kumpakōṇam. As soon as he and a few other friends were settled down there, I began preparing the text for immediate printing.

### Printed copies

Srīṉivāca Rākavācāriyar, the Tamil pandit of Presidency College, had published just the plain text of the *Pukār Kāṇṭam* of *Cilappatikāram* before. He declared Cilappatikāram to be the work of Cēramāṉ Perumāḷ Nāyaṉār. Cōṭacāvatāṉam Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyar had published the same text in 1880 with Aṭiyārkkunallār's commentary. Both books appeared in print because they were prescribed for reading at the University. They contain errors of many kinds. Ceṭṭiyār, in his Introduction, claimed to have simplified the difficult diction whenever necessary, to have expanded or condensed the text as needed, to have written a paraphrase of the *Kāṉalvari* since no commentary on that part existed and, since, under the chapter of *Araṅkēṟṟukāṭai*, there occur limitless and detailed rules relating to music and drama in many places, to have set forth a brief account of these rules thereunder. It was obvious, therefore, that the whole of Aṭiyārkkunallār's commentary had not been reproduced faithfully in that edition. He also tried to get *Maturaikkāṇṭam* printed, but that has not come of.

### Manuscript copies

These two printed copies were absolutely of no use to me. I have myself collected a total of eight copies of the poem itself, and fourteen of the commentary. After having thoroughly examined all these, I prepared my own handwritten copy of the final revised version. Then I began to get together all the other parts that should go with the book. My growing acquaintance with the ancient works of classical Tamil and the experience gained as days went by in the field of editing Tamil texts suggested to me ever more up-to-date methods. In the *Pattuppāṭṭu* I have included certain new divisions and portions not to be found in the edition of *Cintāmaṇi*. It occurred to me that it was necessary to include even more of such matter in the *Cilappatikāram* to assist scholars in their research. Data for that were available in plenty in both the text of and the commentary on *Cilappatikāram*. I felt a strong desire to necessarily include in my notes information about books mentioned by Aṭiyārkkunallār in his commentary. Another idea occurred to me — to provide an alphabetical list of all the characters, under different headings, like kings and so on, who appear in the text and in the gloss. Thus, my research branched out into many spheres, and kept expanding. I wrote out a regular alphabetical index, gathering in separate sections and under separate headings specific matters which belonged together. Students and friends who worked with me assisted me greatly in this particular task. J. Vi. Cuppiramaṇiya Aiyar, a student from Kāṅkēyam, was of special help.

### Specific research for that edition

I collected all rare words and expressions and prepared an alphabetical glossary. Another, separate alphabetical list was prepared of special kinds of information to be met with, to which I referred as Index of Objects. Thus I had a separate alphabetical list of kings, countries, places, mountains, rivers, lakes, gods, poets and so on occurring by name in the epic and in Aṭiyārkkunallār's commentary, and a separate list of the names of the texts quoted by Aṭiyārkkunallār, as well as an index of phrases and idioms, of quotations whose source could not be traced, and I also wrote out an explanation of the appellatives.

All that finished, the synopsis of the *Cilappatikāram* story, Iḷaṅkōvaṭikaḷ's biography, Aṭiyārkkunallār's biography, and notes on works quoted from — these came next to be written.

When I had everything well-organized, I began to write out my Introduction. In my earlier editions I wrote the introductions while the printing of each book was going on. If I wrote it earlier than that, I thought, I could add to it whatever might be necessary later on.

It was my wish to draw attention to the condition of the palmleaf manuscripts. So, in my Introduction, I wrote: "Most of the above-mentioned ancient copies are so faulty that there is no room in them for more errors, revealing that they had been there for long years without anyone studying or teaching them, and if they somehow survived, the credit for it should go to a few merit-deserving men who had made the rewriting and preservation of these books their sacred vow. Any heart would melt at the thought of what an ordeal it has been to study and compare these manuscript copies that appear to have nothing in common, being so damaged and altered by time and neglect."

Just about the time the *Cilappatikāram* was thus made ready for press I informed about it to P. Kumāracāmi Mutaliyār of Colombo. He kept enquiring about the book often, promising to bear the expenses of the publication of *Cilappatikāram* himself. He wrote to me that he would remit Rs. 300. Although that sum was far from sufficient to cover the total cost of the publication of *Cilappatikāram*, I accepted it.

## Printing begins

In the Summer recess of 1891, in June, I went to Madras, and started the printing of *Cilappatikāram.* As the quotations offered by the Tirāviṭa Ratnakāra Press appeared rather exorbitant I entrusted the printing with Veḷḷaiya Nāṭār Jubilee Press. I stayed first in the bungalow of Tavaci Muttu Nāṭār who was the proprietor of the above-mentioned printing works,' in Poonamalee High Road. Later I stayed in the Gardens of Divān Rāmaiyaṅkār. Rāmaiyaṅkar's son-in-law, my student the lawyer Kē. Rājakōpālācāriyar was instrumental in arranging for me the place to stay. Tirumāṉūrk Kiruṣṇaiyar came along to assist me.

I was in two minds about printing the old glossary of rare words to *Cilappatikāram* since it was much damaged and incomplete. I could not decide on the spot, and so I postponed it till the day when the rest of the book would be ready.

I used my stay in Madras for the search of further manuscripts on palm leaves, visiting the houses of many scholars living at that time in the City. Ten stray leaves of the old glossary to *Cilappatikāram* were found in the house of Kurucāmi Aiyar, great-grandson of Caravaṇa Perumāḷ Aiyar. I got them from him, took them home, compared them with the scripts in my possession, and made the necessary corrections. When I asked Kurucāmi Aiyar where had the other portions disappeared he just said that he did not know.

## Double feast

The printing of *Cilappatikāram* went on fast. The distance between the press and the place where I took my meals was two miles. I would eat at ten in the morning, leave, and come back for my supper. One evening, when I arrived at eight o'clock and began to eat, I was startled to find out that the food was really bad. The ghee stank, the sauce was tasteless, without salt or spices, the rice almost raw — it was actually quite nauseating. At that moment I heard a service of reciting the *Tivya pirapantam,* performed by a few persons in Rāma's shrine of the Hanumān Temple, situated to the north of the house where I took my meals. I listened for a brief moment in rapt attention, since I heard the words of *Perumāḷ Tirumoḻi.* At once I got up, washed my hands, and rushed there.

It was a special nights for Srī Vaiṣṇavas. Many old Srī Vaiṣṇavas used to recite in that night hymns from the chapter of Dasaratha's Lament by Kulacēkara Perumāḷ. I knew a few of these people. As soon as I appeared, they offered me a place, and then they proceeded with their soft, moving recitation. I listened to that lovely poetry with rapture; I forgot my hunger. It even seemed to me that the fatigue in my body was disappearing. But that feast for the ears was not the only feast! For following it, I could partake in the delicious rice boiled with various condiments, offered and served as *nivētanam.* Thus I enjoyed a double feast!

When the vacation days drew to a close, I arranged for Kiruṣṇaiyar of Tirumāṉūr to look after the printing, and for the proofs to be sent to me in Kumpakōṇam where, too, I returned.

# Chapter 115

## Cilappatikāram appears

Having returned to Kumpakōṇam, I attended to my usual job at the College, and worked on the edition of *Cilappatikāram*. However, I found out that I had no more funds to pay either for the paper or the printer's fees. Apart from the skill growing constantly within me for carrying out my tasks as editor, I did not really develop the skills to acquire the means to meet the expenses of publication. The printing of seven chapters of *Cilappatikāram* was over; twenty-three remained to be printed.

### Friends who helped me out

I told several friends, patrons of Tamil, and rich gentlemen of my predicament. Most of them helped me just in time — the Heads of the monastic esatablishments at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai, Kuṉṟakkuṭi and Tiruppaṉantāḷ, P. Kumāracāmi Mutaliyār of Colombo, Cātu Cēsaiyar of Kumpakōṇam, and yet several other individuals. Hence I was encouraged to proceed with my work.

### The demise of Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār

The printing of *Cilappatikāram* moved fast ahead. I wanted to finish it soon, and to begin with the publication of yet other books. Meanwhile I was studying these other texts — *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, *Patiṟṟuppattu*, *Maṇimēkalai* and similar classical works. It was at that moment that a calamity overtook the whole of Tamilnadu, in the loss of my dear friend and benefactor, Cēlam Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār. He parted from this life on the 2nd of March, 1892. When I heared the tragical news, I was shocked. I thought of the way I happened to get acquainted with him, and how because of that I was made to enter the field of research into classical Tamil literature. If *he* had not urged me to do it, would I ever have had the *Cintāmaṇi* published? Would I have had anything to do with the efforts of revealing to others the delights of *Caṅkam* poetry after having tasted them myself? In my sadness I composed a few stanzas. Here are a few of them:

*eṉpuṭaiyā ranpuṭaiya irāmacā mikkkuricil*
*uṉpuṭaiyār nayacukuṇam ovvoṉṟai uṉṉiyuṉṉi*
*aṉpuṭaiyār pallōrum āṟṟumvaḷi kāṇārāyt*
*tuṉpuṭaiyā rākimaṉaṉ̊ cōrntiṭaveṅ kakaṉṟaṉaiyē.*

Where have you gone?
The great patron Irāmacāmi
So kind to me,
Leaving to suffer with heavy hearts
Those who love you,
Who know not what to do,
Thinking always thinking
Of your excellent character

*iṉṟēṉum pālumeṉum iṉcoluṭai yāyvairak*
*kuṉṟēṉum ovvāk kuṇaṉuṭaiyāy kuṟṟattuḷ*
*oṉṟēṉum uṉaiyaṇuka oṇṇātō cārntiruppiṉ*
*eṉṟēṉum niṟpirital emmai varuttiṭumō*

Your kind speech is
Sweet as honey and milk,
Even the diamond hill
Is no parallel to your virtues,
Will not a single fault
Be able to near you?
Any day, away from you,
Is painful to us
Being close to you.

*ūrkkuḻaippāṉ pōṉāṉeṉ ṟulaivārum pōṉāṉip*
*pārkkuḻaippā ṉeṉṟu pataippārun tamiḷeṉumun*
*nīrkkuḻaippā ṉeṉṟuruki niṟpāru māykkalaṅka*
*ārkkuḻaippāṉ ceṉṟāy aḷīyuṭaiya aṇṇalē*

Some suffer that
One who worked for citizens
Is gone.
Others sob that
One who worked for the world
Is gone.
There are people who think that
One who worked for the
Ocean of Tamil is gone.
O you kind! you the great!
For whom to serve
You have gone?

With what longing had Mutaliyār looked forward to see both *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* in print! But it was not given to me to fulfil his wish while he was still alive.

Meanwhile I would always go to Madras during holiday time. When I went there during Summer vacations of 1892, Tirumāṉūrk Kiruṣṇaiyar needed to return to his village, and so I gave him leave. There were others to offer me their friendly help: Cakkaravartti Rājakōpālācāriyar of Tiruvaḷuntūr, The *Veṇpāp Puli*—Tiger of Veṇpā, Tillaiviṭaṅkaṉ Vēlucāmip Piḷḷai, Cupparāyalu Nāyuṭu of Miller College. Vai. Mu. Caṭakōpa Rāmāṉujācāriyar, of extraordinary energy and sharp intelligence, was with me to read the proofs and render yet other assistance.

When the main text of *Cilappatikāram* and of the commentary was nearing completion, I was persuaded by many friends to edit and print the old glossary of rare words too, and so I revised and corrected it, to be included at the end of the book.

## The introduction to the Glossary of rare words

I finished writing out the Introduction to *Cilappatikāram* first. In it, I did not say much about the glossary of rare words, but just stated in the footnote, "This glossary of rare words is printed separately and added at the end of this volume."

When the entire glossary was completely printed I felt the need for writing a separate note to it which would give all the necessary information. If that were written out, work on *Cilappatikāram* would be completed.

At this point, as I did not have with me the money I needed to give to the printer, I went to Vicuvanāta Cāstiri, the clerk of Mr. Norton, who lived in Tiruvallikkēṇi, and got the necessary sum from him.

It was a Friday. I felt an irresistable urge to see through the rest of the printing of *Cilappatikāram* on Saturday, have just one copy bound, feast my eyes on it, and return to Kumpakōṇam. When I approached on Friday evening Vicuvanāta Cāstiri, he invited me for dinner in his house. I spent the night there.

With the intention to write an introduction to the glossary of rare words I took a pen and paper from Cāstiriyār, and sat down to write it out. Because I felt very tired, and because of the food I had taken after skipping a meal, I felt heavy with sleep. I could not but lie down; as I was falling asleep, there was only one worrisome thought on my mind : The note has not been written out yet! Unless I wrote that note and handed it over to the press at eight in the morning, shall I be able to see the book completed?

"Well, I'll get up early, and write it out then", I said to myself, and took care to keep a candle and a box of matches nearby.

I slept well. Suddenly, sometime after midnight, I woke up. The incomplete book, *Cilappatikāram*, stood before my mind's eye. I got up, lighted the candle, and saw that it was only two o'clock. Getting up still half asleep made my desire for sleep more urgent than before.

'If I lie down now', I thought, 'shall I be able to get up again at four? And if because of weariness I overslept, would not my work remain hopelessly unfinished?' Although thoughts like this haunted me I felt no urge to sit down and write. At that time when the whole world was sunk in slumber, and my energy was at its lowest ebb, there was absolutely nothing that could give me the necessary impetus and drive.

My eyes rolled up and down; I yawned. Suddenly, looking up, I saw a portrait that hung on the wall opposite. I could not say whose portrait it was. I only knew, judging from the appearance of the subject of the picture, that he must have been a person of extraordinary energy and perseverance. Looking at that face I felt a thrill rising inside me. I didn't know who he was. I said to myself, 'How vigorous he is! And I'm sunk here in a swoon!' And so, whatever it was I actually thought, I took the pen at once; and began to write.

I called to mind whatever I wanted to say about the glossary of rare terms, and I finished writing out that note fast. After that, I of course could not go to sleep again. How could I have?

I asked Vicuvanāta Cāstiriyār that morning whose portrait it was. He told me it was the picture of Mr. Norton, his boss. I then recounted to him how I happened to notice that portrait, and how it had inspired me.

On Saturday, the rest of the printing of *Cilappatikāram* was fully completed. On Sunday evening, with a bound copy of the book in my hand, I made for Kumpakōṇam.

When bound copies of the *Cilappatikāram*, were received from Madras I sent them to those to whom they were due. Having received them my friends wrote to me, complimenting me highly. I sent copies to the Rajah of Irāmanātapuram, Srī Mu. Pāskara Cētupati, too. Along with his acknowledgement of having received the book he wrote that he would invite me to Irāmanātapuram at an opportune moment and that I should come without fail.

## Data on history

It was after *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* and *Pattuppāṭṭu* began circulating in Tamilnadu that the Tamils cultivated the enjoyment of such ancient Tamil literary works and felt proud about them. When *Cilappatikāram* followed, everyone realized the greatness of the ancient culture of Tamilnadu, and the splendour and extent of Tamil arts and culture. Scholars and scientists were overjoyed when their eyes were opened to those unseen and unknown treasures.

*Cilappatikāram* contains many rare historical data. The episode that describes the northern march of the Tamil king Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ, his victory over the rulers of Northern India, and his bringing with him the marble image of Kaṇṇaki was received with amazement. Besides, *Cilappatikāram* furnishes very important evidence for determining the age of *Caṅkam*. The book casts a spell over many who were engaged in the study of Tamilnadu's history.

The various books that became known from Aṭiyārkkunallār's commentary represented a feast to lovers of Tamil. Expecting precisely this, I included an independent account of the books mentioned in the commentary.

## Peruṅkatai

Among the many data discovered by me in that commentary the most important was the one about the celebrated book called *Peṛuṅkatai*. *Koṅkuvēḷ Mākkatai* is one of the texts I searched for and collected. I had thought it to be the story about someone whose name was Koṅku Vēl. That palmleaf manuscript, which had leaves missing at either end, was slumbering in my box.

While researching the commentary of Aṭiyārkkkunallār, I came at one point across the following lines which he had quoted:

*kūttiya rirukkaiyun curṟiya tākak*
*kāppiya vācaṉai kalantavai colli*

"He ordered quarters for dancing women
and expository discourses on epics

He describes those lines to a story of Utayaṇaṉ composed after a study of the works of Middle *Caṅkam*.

When I turned over the leaves of *Koṅkuvēḷ Mākkatai* which I had with me, I came one day just upon those two lines. I looked at it intently. I read what was before and after. The name Utayaṇaṉ occured many times. *Koṅkuvēl Mākkatai* and the story of Utayaṇaṉ were one and the same! Later I learnt from Aṭiyārkkunallār's commentary that the work was also known as *Katai* and *Peruṅkatai*. I now began to study that book which I had thus far ignored with redoubled zeal.

I included in the notes I have written all the information I had gleaned from the palmleaf scripts in my possession. About the story of Utayaṇaṉ I wrote, "In the copy I now have, because of the beginning and the end of the manuscript being damaged, I can see that 32 sections of the first part, known as *Uncaikkāṇṭam*, are missing; I do not know how many cantos after the fifth, the *Naravāṇakāṇṭam*, this book had originally contained, and the number of sections included in them. *One can say that this work was discovered now solely as a result of a close examination of this commentary of Aṭiyārkkunallār.*" My intention was to reveal by this remark that I had in my possession a copy of such book.

## Other books

In this way, in a note on *Muttoḷḷāyiram*, I wrote the following about *Puṟattiraṭṭu*: "The work known as *Muttoḷḷāyiram* is at present not available; however, in the anthology *Puṟattiraṭṭu* it is written, while quoting the *veṇpā* beginning with *vāriya peṇṇai* — and mentioning the names of books cited as examples, that it belongs to a work called *Muttoḷḷāyiram*."

*I wrote in some detail in the same way about other ancient works like Akanāṉūṟu, Kuṟūntokai, Patiṟṟuppattu, Paripāṭal, Puṟanāṉūṟu* and *Maṇimēkalai*. When I spoke about the commetary on *Tirukkōvaiyār* composed by Pērāciriyar I added this remark: "It is the opinion of many that this commentary was written by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar; I too had thought so. However, the author of Birayōka Vivēkam, in Tamil Cuppiramaṇiya Paṇṭitar, argues in many places of his commentary on *Pirayōka Vivēkam* that the author of the commentary of Tirukkōvaiyār had been Pērāciriyar, and that Pēraciriyar's name is mentioned frequently as the commentator in the gloss on *Tirucciṟṟampalakkōvaiyār*, as preserved in palmleaf manuscripts discovered in the house of traditional Tamil scholars living in Ālvār Tirunakari and other places of the Southern Country; when one considers the problem carefully, one sees that there is not the slightest difference between them, and that therefore one should absolutely not insist that the author of the commentary of this book, published in print, has been Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar."

Such notes which I added attracted greatly the attention of people interested in Tamil. I concluded the Introduction saying, "I now offer my devout prayers to the holy lotus-feet of God Lord Almighty that it may be given to me to bring other similar publications as this *Cilappatikāram* in just the form I wish, and also to graciously bestow His blessings on those who have helped me by giving me their scripts and material assistance." All this together caused a stir in Tamilnadu.

At different places people met, I was thanked and congratulated, and urged to publish ever more texts. My friends wrote me letters, trying to persuade me to begin working with this or that book, each according to their wish.

As soon as the publication of *Cilappatikāram* was accomplished, the Tamil people exhorted me, with love, to furnish yet other jewels to adorn with them the Tamil Muse, and so I began to weigh in my mind which literary work to take up next.

## Chapter 116

## Information on Kampar and the Cētupati's Presentation

While — many years ago — I was talking one day with the Head of the Mutt at Tiruvāvaṭuturai, a Śrī Vaiṣṇava arrived from Tēraḻuntūr. I asked him what was special about his place. It was from him that I received the information that that particular Tēraḻuntūr was the birth-place of Kampar.

### The Aḻuntūr Mutt

Its proper name is Tiruvaḻuntūr. Tiruñānacampantar, divinely inspired, had composed about it a decade of hymns in the *Tēvāram;* there, the place goes under the name Aḻuntai. The Śrī Vaiṣṇava who came on that day to Tiruvāvaṭuturai told me that the main deity in the local Śaiva temple is worshipped under the name Vētapurīcar. He maintained that in the temple itself there is only one icon, that of Makāmaṭēcuvarar, and that, according to what the old people say, He was the most auspicious deity of the holy bathing place. I then remembered a line from Tēvāram,

*aḻuntai māmaṟaiyōr*
*vaḻipāṭucey māmaṭa maṉṉiṉaiyē.*

"O Māmaṭa worshipped by
Great Brahmins of Aḻuntai...."

It seemed to me that the deity celebrated in Tiruñānacampatar's hymns must have been this Makāmaṭēcuvarar. And the verse "worshipped by Great Brahmins", which, literally translated, means, "worshipped by those who are expert in the Great Vedas", indicates that there probably was a Vedic school there in the olden days, and that is why the place was also known as Vētapuri.

I derived a strange satisfaction from the thought that Kampar's native village was a *sthala* which found its place in the *Tēvāram*. During Kampar's time, very possibly, the ancient Vedas and the ever-fresh Virgin Tamil flourished side by side in that village.

### Kampar's native place

Kampar is the subject of many stories and anecdotes current in Tamilnadu. There are plenty of solitary stanzas devoted to him, too. Aṣṭāvatānam Vīrācāmi Cettiyār had collected and arranged in his book *Vinōtarasa Mancari* such individual poems and songs as well as information gathered from purely oral traditions, made up a story lovely to read, and wrote it down as Kampar's biography. However, the historical truth is apparently an entirely different matter.

From the Special Prefaces to *Kamparāmāyanam* as well as from the stray verses one may gather that Kampar was a Uvaccar[1] born at Tiruvaḷuntūr, that he had a Vēḷāḷa patron by name of Caṭaiyappa Vaḷḷāl, and that this patron's native place was Veṇṇeynallūr. A village called Tiruvaḷuntūr is situated near Mayūram. It is a famous Vaiṣṇava *sthala*. Some people suspect that Kampar could have been born there. But the original name of that place was Tiru Intaḷūr.

The term *uvaccar*, is the designation of a community engaged in temple pūjais; in colloquial usage, it appears as *ōccar*. In the manuscript of *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟ Payakaramālai* which I discovered at Mitilaippaṭṭi, the name of its author is given as Vīrapattirak Kampar. From this it seems that *'Kampar'* is the name of a community; that the personal name of the great poet Kampar had been lost, and that only the community-name has been preserved. Those men who in olden times were engaged in setting up and consecrating temple-pillars *(Kampam)* were possibly called by their caste-name *Kampar*.

### Katir Vēy Maṅkalam

Kē. Kalyāṇacuntaraiyar, a well-known lawyer from Tañcāvūr, and one of those who were my most affectionate friends, had a new house constructed in his native place, Katirāmaṅkalam, and in June 1892 celebrated there the festive 'house warming'. He wrote me that I simply must come and participate in that festivity. As soon as I received his invitation, I accepted, and went, since I felt great desire to visit Kampar's native place which was situated very near to that particular village.

Getting off the train at Kuttālam Railway station, one can reach Katirāmaṅkalam by walking a few miles towards north. While on the train I met an inhabitant of Katirāmaṅkalam by name Kōpāla Kiruṣṇa Jōsyar. He began talking about Kampar.

"Kampar was born at Tēraḻuntūr. Veṇṇey Nallūr lies to the north of that place. That's the village of Caṭaiyappa Vaḷḷal. There is also a connection between our village of Katirāmaṅkalam and Kampar's story," he said.

"How so?" I asked, eagerly.

"The original name of our village was Katir vēy Maṅkalam. That has been altered in course of time into Katirāmaṅkalam."

"And what is the origin of the name Katir Vēy Maṅkalam?"

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[1] *Uvaccars* were priests in temples.

"Kampar fell in love with a *dāsī* and was coming to visit her regularly. She lived in that village. One day she complained that she needed new straw to thatch the roof of her house. The poet went to his patron Caṭaiyappa Vaḷḷal, and the generous man ordered the house of the girl to be thatched with ears of paddy, cut for that purpose. That's how the village got its name — Katir vēy Maṅkalam — Place of prosperity, thatched with ears of corn."

I heard the story then for the first time. I had only known that there was a frequent liaison between Kampar and various temple-dancers. This little story illustrated the generosity of Caṭaiyappa Vaḷḷal. I thanked the Jōsyar, grateful for this little story which made my going to Katirāmaṅkalam profitable.

When I was at Katirāmaṅkalam, I heard the same story told by a number of people, and I checked it. After the feast of house warming I went to Tēraḻuntūr. There I was shown a place called *Kampar Mētu-Kampar's Hill.* My informants maintained that it was on that hillock that Kampar's house was situated. In the Perumāl Temple of that village, I saw the icons of Kampar and his wife. I visited the Vētapurīcar Temple, and saw the shrine of Makāmaṭēcuvarar.

There is a village in the neighbourhood, called *Kṣēttirapālapuram.* The name Kṣēttirapālar is one of the appelatives of Bhairava. There is a line in Kampar's ever first stanza which says.

*Vāytta vayirapura mākāḷi yammēkēḷ*

Listen, o great Mother Kāḷi of excellent Vayirapuram.

The name *Vayiravapuram* occuring in that stanza must be the name of that village. The temple of Kāḷi mentioned there still stands today. It's known as Aṅkāḷiyamman Kōyil.

### Veṇṇey Nallūr

Subsequently I went to Veṇṇey Nallūr. Traditionally it was known to be Caṭaiyappa Piḷḷai's village; it was a settlement with sixty *vēli* — measures. It has also a watertank with a statue of Viṣṇu on its bank. There is a funny song about spilling milk mentioning a place called Veṇṇey ('Butter') in which, according to the opinion of some, the tank *(vāvi)* of that village is also mentioned.

*mōṭṭerumai vāvipuka muṭṭuvarāl kaṉṟeṉṟū*
*vīṭṭaḷavum pālcoriyum veṇṇeyē*

The huge she-buffalows
When they got into the ponds
Were struck by the prawns
And they mistook them
For their calfs.
Their milk splashed
Into the houses in Veṇṇai

I visited the Saiva temple of Katirāmaṅkalam. While I worshipped the local Vināyaka, I noticed something written on its altar. It was a short inscription saying just 'Veṇṇey Nallūrp Piḷḷaiyār". I heard that particular icon used to stand at the side of the road going from Māyūram to Tañcāvūr, and that it was installed in the temple in order that it would be preserved and protected.

It was a pleasure for me to see and hear all this, and I returned to Kumpakōṇam steeped in thoughts about Kampar. To get hold of new details concerning the life of Kampar has always been a source of boundless delight for me, since I used to read and enjoy *Kamparāmāyaṇam* almost constantly.

One of the palmleaf manuscripts in my possession is entitled *Kāṇiyāḷar* Akaval. From its study one can gather the 64 gotres of the Vēḷāḷar of the Cōḷa country. One of these is the *Caṭaiyappa Nayiṉār Kōttiram*. The Vēḷaḷar of the Cōḷa country carry the title Nayiṉār. I take it to be the *kōttiram* of Caṭaiyappa Vaḷḷal's ancestors.

I informed the Head of Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt, Srī Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, about my findings concerning Kampar, his village, and the other places. Being a connoisseur of literary art, he enjoyed my report greatly.

Piṉṉattūr A. Nārāyaṇacāmi Aiyar, who was of assistance to me later in my editorial activities, has gathered from me the information concerning Kampar and some other data, and having added it to the material he had already collected, he published it in the commentary of a Tamil textbook which he published.

### The festival of Navarātrī

I received an invitation from Srī Pāskara Sētupati of Irāmanātapuram to attend there the Navarātrī Festival of that year. I took leave of ten days from the College, reached Maturai on train and proceeded from there by bullock-cart to Irāmanātapuram. I met wagon after wagon on the road, loaded to breaking point. And indeed, many were standing with the axle-tree broken under their load. All of them were heading for Irāmanātapuram, and I guessed from that what a grand occasion the Navarātrī festival was bound to be.

Hundreds of scholars had arrived from Tamilnadu and from places outside. And one must say that among the great personalities in Tamilnadu not one had been left out. The town was packed to bursting with crowds. Prices of commodities multiplied many times.

A thousand and eight conches were filled with holy water for use in the ablutions of Mother Rāja Rājēsvari, the tutelary deity of the Cētupati kings. The worship and other ceremonies were most elaborate. There were innumerable music performances, singing concerts, and so on and so forth. There were also meetings by Sanskrit *vittuvāṉs* and Tamil pandits.

Makā Vaittiyanātaiyar could not then attend because of illness; only his brother had arrived. I was used to see the two always together, just like the famous *Iraṭṭaiyar,* and so, seeing only Irāmacuvāmi Aiyar, alone, was like seeing a lifeless body. I asked, "Your brother is not here; is his illness serious?"

"Yes. We must trust in the grace of Piraṇatārtti-Harar! I didn't wish to come either. But my brother Vaitti said, 'Don't worry and go.' I have been here many times. It's a place I like well. So I came," he said.

They made arrangements for me so that I would have my own lodgings. It was indeed a rare opportunity to meet many different scholars in one place. The scholars as well as my friends congratulated me on having accomplished the publication of *Cilappatikāram*. "When one looks at the list of literary works you have quoted; it is like a mountain!" they said and asked, "What are you going to publish next?"

I answered, "There's *Maṇimēkalai;* there's *Puṟanāṉūru;* there is *Patiṟṟuppattu, Aiṅkuṟunūṟu, Akanāṉūṟu, Naṟṟiṇai* — all these! And the lot should be published, one by one." At that time I have not yet decided what exactly to begin with next.

I had the opportunity then to get closely acquainted with and to talk frequently to Mutturāmaliṅkaṯ Tēvar, the Zamindar of Ciṟuvayal and to Pāṇṭi Turait Tēvar, the son of Poṉṉucāmit Tēvar and the Zamindar of Pālavanattam. Mutturāmaliṅkat Tēvar was related to Pāskara Cētupati as he was his grandfather's brother. He promised to be of assistance when money would be needed for further editions.

I was quite unaware of the flow of time during the ten days I stayed there. I watched with astonishment the Cētupati's polite hospitableness, his witty conversation and his immense generosity. I heard that he had spent on that festival more than two lakhs of rupees.

The scholars composed many a praise-poem on the Cētupati. I too composed and read out some verses. I remember now just these two lines:

*Viṇṇiṟ ciṟantitu pāṟkaṭaṟpōl virumpuminta*
*maṇṇiṟ ciṟantuyar pārkara pūpati vāṟliyavē*

Upon the skies shines splendidly white Moon.
On this earth shines, Sun-like, Lord Pāskara Pūpati.

## A gift given with respect

As I was taking leave of King Cētupati, he put on my shoulders a pair of most expensive shawls and said, "I'm going to visit the district of Tancāvūr. I shall then talk to you at leisure, and give you what assistance you need for the great service to Tamil you're engaged in." At the moment of departure, the treasurer of the palace placed in my hands a sum of one hundred rupees to meet travelling and other daily expenses. Arriving at Kuṁpakōṇam, I showed the shawls to my parents and to my friends. Everyone rejoiced. When I went to Tiruvāvaṭuturai and showed them to Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, he said, in praise, "These are awards of the highest order; and you've been honoured just in the way you deserve."

I answered, "What honour is mine apart from being associated with this monastery?" And then I asked, "What may be the probable cost of these two?"

"It will be more than three hundred rupees," said Aṁpalavāṇa Tēcikar.

"What use do I have for these garments? I should like to give them away and leave them here."

What? Why do you say so? These are symbols of honours conveyed upon you by a great prince! You should cherish them and preserve them carefully for yourself!"

"I have worrisome commitments caused by the printing of *Cilappatikāram.* There's no way for me how to honour them. If I keep these shawls, how are they going to help me? These are gifts earned in the service of Mother Tamil. Hence it is only fitting that I should rededicate them to Her use."

Although the idea of my giving away these gifts did not please Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, he understood my hint, accepted the shawls on behalf of the Mutt and arranged for my being paid Rs. 300 in exchange for them. With the help of that sum I was able to clear the loans I had raised for the printing of *Cilappatikāram.*

In the joy of having got rid of the debt I felt free to make my next choice in Tamil editing. Although I had a great many texts in my hands, I had devoted a most thorough study to *Manimēkalai* and *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. Between those two, *Puṟanāṉūṟu* had an ancient commentary for more than half of the text. There was no commentary available for *Maṇimēkalai*. Moreover I could not fully understand some doctrines contained in that Buddhist book. Such being the case, I decided to prepare the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* as first for the press.

Meanwhile, following the wish of Srī Čuppiramaṇiyat Tampirān, the Head Steward of Titupperunturai, I published, towards the end of 1892, the *sthala-purāṇam* of that place composed by Srī Pillai. Although I would have liked to provide notes and other explanatory materials, because of the Tamipirān's insistance that the work should appear soon, I published only the bare text.

Then I immersed myself in a deep study of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*.

## Chapter 117

## Research in Puṟanāṉūṟu

As soon as I decided that I would next publish in print the *Puṟanāṉūṟu,* I began thinking about the method of editing. I felt great desire to gradually gather new information as to the new methods and techniques of editing and publishing, and publish the texts accordingly. I did not have the ability to look at and enjoy the best publications in English, and take them as models in work, because of my ignorance of that language. I had only the grace of God to help me in my study of *Caṅkam* classics, in researching them after I had read them, and finally in publishing them. I had no previous experience in such work, but I kept constantly trying to find out all possible ways in which to make my publications more attractive.

### New methods

One day I found in the hands of K. R. Turaicāmi Aiyar, Professor of History in Kumpakōṇam College, an English book of a large size.

"What kind of book is it?" I asked.

"The Bible", he said.

"Isn't the Bible usually of small size? This one is so enormous!"

"This is a special edition of the Bible. They have published here all the principal words and ideas, having gathered and classified all the particular matters occuring in the Bible, with references to every other place where they occur again. Such cross-references are printed seperately, right in the middle of each page. They call it *concordance* in English." While he explained it to me, he opened the book and showed me what he meant.

I saw numbers of various kinds in the cross-reference colums. There were also the pictures of the compiler and of his assistant in the book.

I asked, "What is the use of those cross-references?"

He explained it clearly to me. "One and the same matter is mentioned many times in the Bible. The same phrases are repeated again and again. By putting them all together and studying them, they arrived at the true meaning of some of these matters, and at the correct form of words. It is maintained that research of this kind has helped in discovering faultless readings of the text of the Bible."

That seemed to me like a new method which I could adopt in my study of *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. I realized that it would be easy to catch the correct forms and meanings if I first arranged all the incidents and words of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* in alphabetical order and then researched them. So, I had such a list prepared.

## The tools of research

If one wants to publish a text properly, one must first prepare a number of aids. To simply acquire palmleaf manuscripts is not enough. What one finds in the manuscripts is usually not so perfect. One can see in it variations manifesting errors of many different periods. It is a very tough job to find out which exactly is the correct reading. To put together an index of ideas and an index of words occuring in the text is not sufficient. Many poets have contributed to *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. The poems of those poets do occur in other collections, too. A study of such stanzas can tell us much about the ways of expression, favourite themes and diction of those poets. Such research will yield a few corrections and emendations. Hence I wrote out an alphabetic index of the names of *Caṅkam* poets, and put together the information about the exact location of their poems in the anthologies, all for my study.

In order to know the ethos current in the literary works of the *Caṅkam* period, one must examine them in all their totality. We may imagine the *Caṅkam* works to form together an organic body. This entire body is animated by one single pulse. Therefore, we must study them all fully, to be able to clearly understand their message. For thus grappling with this problem I prepared an alphabetic index of the entire body of *Caṅkam* texts, those which I did possess.

Such a study of the entire body of *Caṅkam* classics became indispensable for my research work on *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. Although I did derive manifold pleasure from it, it was also very tiresome in many ways. It became absolutely necessary to seek the help of many.

## Those who helped

Tirumāṉūr A. Kirusṇaiyar who was with me and M. V. Irāmāṉujācāriyar helped constantly in this expanded research. Srī Cokkaliṅkat Tampirāṉ[1] who studied Tamil literature with me at that time, was also of assistance in this inquiry. Empal Poṉṉucāmi Piḷḷai and a few of the College students offered their services to the extent they were capable of.

## The elucidation of quotations

The commentators on grammars and on literary works quoted the poems of *Puṟanāṉūṟu* in full or in parts. Examining such quotations and the reason why they were cited does help in understanding the thought-content of the poem itself along with the emendation of textual errors. It is necessary, after having prepared the indexes, to study all the commentaries and find out whether a quotation from part of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* occurs there. In most of the printed works there were no indexes or other types of guidance. And in the palmleaf manuscripts it was difficult to find and discern texts cited as quotations. Those who then studied the texts would note down points of interest their masters revealed to them in between two lines in the manuscripts. Those who earned their living by being paid for making copies of the existing manuscripts would carry over such notes together with the text and commentary into the copies they made. While performing textual research, it becomes sometimes very troublesome to tell which is which.

It became a rule for me to indicate underneath the source of a quotation if I happened to know it while reading a commentary. In my own printed copies of the commentaries on *Tolkāppiyam* and *Tirukkuṟal* which I used in my work I also jotted down the sources of most of the quotations found in them. This effort was worthwhile for it enabled me to trace down the mistaken readings occuring in those editions. When I used them in my editions, I gave their correct form only, and apart from that I abstained from declaring them to be mistakes; this has not become my custom.

Research like this, on quotations alone, consumed an enormous amount of time. However great, though, the laborious efforts spent on the classification and listing might be, the hard toil suffered through once was of use for many subsequent editions. Such indexes of different kinds which I had prepared and kept on my shelves in those days serve me to this day as veritable treasures of information. Whenever I look at them, I am lost in wonder at the thought, 'How much time, how much labour of devoted friends has gone into them!' Readers of the printed books will little realize their tremendous value. Those who gaze in admiration at a splendid, high mansion and are lost in its beauty do not pause to think of the foundations on which it had been raised. That foundation, that has cost so much care, is hidden under the ground.

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[1] Cokkaliṅkat Tampirāṉ, later (1919-1930) he was head of the Kāci Maṭam at Tiruppanantāḷ

In the commentary on the *Poruḷatikāram* of *Tolkāppiyam* are found many quotations of poems from *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. I had in my hands the *Puṟattiraṭṭu* which contains a number of poems, too. Many of the gaps in my incomplete copies of *Puṟanāṉūṟu* were thus filled in with the help of these texts.

*Puṟanāṉūṟu* consists of 400 poems. At the end of my research, I still could not trace Numbers 267 and 268. In several poems, lines were missing in the beginning; in others, final portions were missing; in a number of poems, a few middle portions could not be found.

## The Commentary

Some of the copies of *Puṟanāṉūṟu* which I had in my possession contained an old commentary. There was no clue to find out who was the author of that commentary. That commentary covered the poems from the first to number 266. And the commentary dealing with number 242 onwards was in places damaged. The author of the commentary gives the meaning of words in a pleasant manner, in proper contexts his analysis of the constructions is apt, and he gives grammatical notes and mentions situations and themes as well as figures of speech and various tropes, quoting even proverbs from time to time. Here and there some expressions seem to be irrelevant to the contexts. In a few places he refutes certain points. Hence one may infer that there might have been an ancient commentary on the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* in existence once.

## The situations and the themes

At the end of each stanza, the particular situation *(tiṇai)* and theme *(turāi)* are given as well as the name of the poet and the name of the person to whom the poem is addressed to. Naccinārkkiṉiyar writes in his commentary on *Tolkāppiyam*, "Those who had stated the themes of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* poems have done so as if dealing with a book new to them; because *Akattiyam* and *Tolkāppiyam* are *the* grammars of the Anthologies, let us realize that one should proclaim the themes as having the meaning found in their aphorisms." Although this is what his opinion is, the assignment of situations and themes as found in the manuscript copies must be of long standing. It seems that assignment followed mostly the rules of an ancient grammar of *puṟapporuḷ* called *Paṉṉiru-paṭalam*. That ancient treatise is not available. However, I had then with me its derivative treatise, both the text and the commentary, called *Puṟapporuḷ veṇpā mālai;* this was a manuscript copy on palm leaves. I studied it carefully and found in it the descriptive treatment of most of the situations *(tiṇai)* and themes *(tuṟai)*. Nevertheless, even in that treatise I could not find the explanation of several themes.

## Historical data

Historical data occur in the comments on the names of the heroes and the authors. They are to be very helpful in the study of the history of the *Caṅkam*

Age. There were rather frequent discrepancies in these two kinds of names. So I made special lists of such names and searched in other texts to see whether these names occurred in them. This historical research was like an immense ocean. The ocean is bound to have a shore somewhere; this one was shoreless on every side.

I had an idea that I could engage experts in historical research to explain those matters to me. I referred the names of a few kings of certain places, and similar matters, to Rao Bahadur V. Venkayya, former Government Superintendent of Epigraphy. He wrote back, sending me notes on kings like Atiyamāṉ and Karikāl Vaḷavaṉ, and on places like Veṇṇi and Miḻalai.

Śrī Vi. Kaṉakacapaip Piḷḷai, retired Superintendent of Post Offices, was keenly interested in Taṃil classics and in the history of Tamilnadu. He was collecting rich data with the intention of compiling and writing out a history of the Tamils. As a result of these efforts he published later a precious book in English entitled *The Tamils 1800 Years Ago*.

He was my friend. He helped me with some palmleaf manuscripts that he owned. And he was one of those who enquired frequently about the progress of my editorial work and who used to encourage me in my activities.

## The word *tuñciya*

I wrote to him, too, to help me throw some light on a few problems. One of them, quite important, was the frequent use of the word *tuñciya* occuring in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* with the names of kings. When I read constructions like Kāriyāṟṟ—*ṭ*— tuñciya Neṭuṅkiḷḷi, Cēramāṉ Kōṭṭampalattu—t—*tuñciya* Mākkōtai, Cōḷaṉ Kurāppaḷḷi—t—*tuñciya* Peruntirumāvaḷavaṉ, it occurred to me that the meaning of the expression *tuñciya* occuring in these names may be "who died"; however, I had some doubts : Why would there be an allusion under a panegyric poem on a king to his death? I'll give an example.

In *Puṟanāṉūṟu* 34, a poet by name of Alattūr Kiḷār sings about a Cōḻa king called Kiḷḷi Vaḷavaṉ saying in praise,

*koṇṭaṉ māmaḻai poḻinta*
*nuṇpak ṟuḷiyiṉum vāḻiya palavē*

... may he live many years and prosper
more than the fine river Pahṟuḷi
fed by the flow of the eastern rains!

At the end of this stanza, there is a gloss saying, Ālattūr Kiḷār's song about Cōḻaṉ Kiḷḷivaḷavaṉ who died at Kuḷamuṟṟam. The poem celebrates the king; in the colophon, his death is explicitly mentioned. These colophons must have been written by those who later anthologized the poems. To notice where this or that king died was obviously within the tradition. But I did not know at that time, and so it did not occur to me that the word *tuñciya*, literally 'he who fell asleep', could mean 'who died'. Kaṉakacapaip Piḷḷai—explained this to me.

He wrote back, telling me that indeed the proper meaning of *tuñciya* in that context is 'who died'. In support of his conclusion he quoted *Cilappatikāram* and

*Tēvāram*. He also informed me of a similar custom current elsewhere, saying that the same tradition — namely to mention specifically the place or time of death of kings — prevailed also with the *Sāmūtiri* kings of Calicut and Trivandrum. At the end he wrote, "When this wonderful *Puṟanāṉūṟu* is published, the Tamil people will be amazed to learn many marvelous things. Many will take up the study of Tamilnadu's history. You should publish it fully and fast."

So, I have learned many things, performed a lot of research, gathered large quantity of data for notes, and preparing somehow all this to be printed and published, I set out for Madras.

# Chapter 118

# Three sad events

*Puṟanāṉūṟu* was handed over to the V. N. Jubilee Press in January of 1893. I stayed, as usual, at Rāmaiyaṅkār Gardens, and attended to the work of printing. It so happened that it was not possible to secure the assistance of Tirumāṉūrk Kiruṣṇaiyar at this stage of the printing. Vai. Mu. Caṭakōparāmāṉujācāriyar was with me and rendered me great help. When it came to publishing he was a most accomplished person. He alone was able to take care of work otherwise requiring two or three men. So, the publication went fast ahead.

## The copy of Catāciva Piḷḷai

One day I went to see Catāciva Piḷḷai who was in charge of Āṟumuka Nāvalar's Press in Madras. He told me that he had a copy of *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, and then sent it to me through a friend. It was only the bare text, and very incomplete; it contained only stanzas 267 to 369. Still, the copy was of great-use to me.

In that way, a total of 18 formes of *Puṟanāṉūṟu* had been printed. As the reopening of the College drew near, I set out from Madras leaving instructions for further proofs to be sent to Kumpakōṇam. I went via Cēlam in order to see a few villages. It was my wish to visit certain places mentioned in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* and see if I could collect any local traditions about them. When I stopped at Karūr, certain lawyers there told me, "Some of our clients have names ending with Vaḷḷal." In the *Pattuppāṭṭu* as well as in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* are celebrated the names and histories of The Last Seven Vaḷḷal (Munificent Patrons); I thought that the people mentioned at Karūr could well be the descendents of the Seven.

## Ve. Pa. Cuppiramaṇiya Mutaliyār

After my return to Kumpakōnam I finished the Index to *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. At that time, Srīmān Rao Sahib Ve. Pa. Cuppiramaṇiya Mutaliyār was the Superintendent of the Veterinary Service in that region. I knew him personally. I liked him very much for his love of Tamil and keen interest in *Kamparāmāyaṇam*. Whenever he camped near Kumpakōṇam I went to see him and talk to him. He would also read for me the poems he had composed. I was at first quite amazed that someone who had received a perfect English education, and had an important official job, should be so deeply interested in and attached to Tamil.

At the College, I tried to do my job as best as I could. After Gopala Rao, all the Principals appointed there showed great kindness to me, just as he did. Mr. Bilderbeck, who was the Principal at the time of the printing of *Cintāmaṇi*, had always greatly encouraged me. He arranged for the book, when it was out, to be sent to the University of Cambridge and other places, and for acknowledgement with thanks to be sent to me.

## A Midsummer Night's Dream

At the time the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* was in the press, our Principal was G. H. Stone. Many activities took place in the College in his time. Once, he made the students of the college put on the stage a Tamil version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The play was translated into Tamil by Nārāyaṇacuvāmi Aiyar, a member of the College staff. According to his wish I touched up his translation and composed a few songs to be inserted here and there. The performance proved a splendid success. While I went through the translation, a new idea occurred to me: Shakespeare's plays could be brought out in Tamil translation with the help of someone who knew English, and the plays of the great poet Kālidāsa could be published in a mixed prose-verse Tamil, version. I had already translated a few *ślokas* from the *Śakuntalā* while I was studying in the Mutt. However, I soon brought back my mind to my true task: 'Wasn't it my true and only vocation to bring out editions without spot and blemish of ancient Tamil classics?' Some of my colleagues at the College advised me from time to time, "Why don't you write new books in good prose! They could be prescribed as textbooks. In addition, they could bring in sizeable income. "Although at times, whenever I was hard up, their idea commeded itself to me, I resisted the temptation and my mind, steeped exclusively in literay research of ancient Tamil, has overcome all such petty desires.

## Assistance to Kāvēriyācci

The wife of Śri Piḷḷai, Mrs. Kāvēriyācci, lived at that time at Mayūram. There was no one to take care of her, even to support her. She used to write frequently, complaning about her impoverished state. I tried to help her out from time to time. There were many occasions when I remembered greatefully Śrī Pilḷị while I was engaged in the editorial work, published old Tamil classics. One of the urgent reasons to remember him were the letter of Kāvēriyācci.

## Publication of Tiruppukaḻ

The District Munsif at Tiruttaruppūṇṭi was then a person called T. Cuppiramaṇiya Piḷḷai of Vaṭakkuppaṭṭu. He was an ardent devotee of god Murukaṉ. In those days it was current to sing at a number of occasions the *Tiruppukaḻ* composed by Aruṇakirinātar. A few people possessed palmleaf manuscripts of

*Tiruppukal̲.* Cuppiramaṇiya Piḷḷai, totally absorbed in the poetic outpourings of Aruṇakirinātar, began to take energetic measures for the songs of the *Tiruppukal̲* to be gathered, classified and published. He used every occasion to collect the stanzas of *Tiruppukal̲* in all the places he went to in connection with his job, and even in adjoining places. He collected manuscripts. He listened to those who sang the hymns, and took them down in writing. I presented him with a few manuscripts which were in my possession. When I learned how much effort it cost him to go about and gather the data, I developed rather an attachment to him. He used to write me frequently. When finally he began with the printing of the *Tiruppukal̲* he would send me proofs regularly. I looked them through, corrected them, and sent them back. At the time I was editing *Puranāṉūru* this activety round Tiruppukal used to keep me in touch with the devotion to Lord Murukan̲ and encouraged me greatly emotionally.

## The death of Makāvaittiyanātaiyar

The year 1893 brought three very sad events. On 27-1-1893, Makāvaittiya nātaiyar has abolished his earthly body compounded of the five elements, and assumed a glorified body in the World of Eternal Music. My father, the Head of Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt, myself, and many others, hearing the sad news, felt an inconsolable grief. Everyone everywhere complained: 'When shall we hear hereafter a voice like his?' It would indeed be difficult that this country would again give birth to someone who would excel as he did in Śaivite devotion, mastery of language, gentleness and nobility, and skill in music, all joined in one marvelous performance.

## I lose my father

Both my parents fell ill in September of that year. They were both seriously ill. There was no hope for either of them. It seemed mother might predecease father. But Fate decided otherwise. On October 7th the doctor came as usual and examined both of them. "Your father's condition is critical," he said, "you had better take him downstairs." We did so. He retained complete consciousness even then. He went repeating to himself the *dhyāna śloka* of the *Pañcākṣaramantra*, and another aid to meditation on Śrī Mīn̲āṭci Cuntarēcar. I stood near him, watchful. At the moment he was about to lose consciousness, he told me to draw near and said, in a very faint voice, "Remain a good devotee of Śiva all your life." After that, I have had never the good luck to listen to father's words again. I have never forgotton the advice he gave me; I have tried to follow it as well as I could. I do not deserve in the least to join true devotees of Lord Śiva. Father had been Śiva's staunch devotee. He has made the adoration of Śiva the very substance of his life. That devotion to Śiva is a family treasure inherited from him. Hence it has become a part of me even inspite myself. However, where am I-and where was my father!

He has left us. Mother was not aware of his death when it came; she has been unconscious due to her illness. As soon as the sorrowful news of my father's demise fell on her ears, that fainting fit vanished. At once she rose and sat up and began wailing. At that moment, too, a tremendous grief overcame me; I wept; I lamented ceaselessly. My friends comforted me in my grief. They wrote letters. Many revealed their sadness by composing a number of elegies.

As I was contemplating my father's qualities, I poured out my feelings in a few stanzas. Whenever I thought of him, the first thing I used to recall was his devotion to Śiva and his adoration of the Lord. Then I remembered his great attainments in music. My heart melted as I thought of the care he took that I should advance well in life, how because of my education he went from place to place, stopping here and there guided only by the facilities the place provided for my Tamil studies, and his great efforts to secure for me true progress in learning. Some of these thoughts found place in the elegiac verses I composed. Two of the stanzas ran as follows:

*meyyāra nīṟaṇintu viḻimaṇimā likaipūṇṭu*
*kaiyāra malarēntik kacinturukit tiṉantōṟum*
*maiyārum maṇimiṭaṟṟu mātēvai arruccikkum*
*aiyāveṉ ṉaiyāveṉ naiyāveṅ kakaṉṟaṉaiyē*

"Where has thou gone, my Father, where indeed?
Where can I see thee as thou didst sit in prayer,
Daily with melting heart,
Adoring Him of the Azure Throat with rare
And true devotion-with sacred ash and bead
Adoring thy brow and body, and such sweet
And fragrant flowers in handfuls for God's own Feet?

(*Transl. S. K. Guruswamy*)

*paṟṟaleṅkē centamiḻaip paṟṟikkaṟ rōrpalarpāl*
*tuṟṟalēṅkē mīṇāṭci cuntaranal lāriyaṉpāl*
*kaṟṟaleṅkē kaṟṟuk kavalaiyorīi yannilaiyē*
*niṟṟaleṅkē iṉṟuvarai nīyarulçey yāviṭiṉē*

But for your fastering care till now
Where do I have a support?
Can I, holding fast to classical Tamil
Learn it from several scholars
And from Mīṇāṭçi cuntaram
The good and great teacher,
And persue it till today
With worries, no?

*attā niṉatupiri vallaṟ kaṭalaḻuttip*
*pittākki yeṉṉaip peritum varuttuṟumāl*
*yettāṉan ceṉṟāy ituvōniṉ taṇṇaḷiyē*
*cattāṉa iṉpamuṟu caṅkīta cākaramē*

The Ocean of sweet and perennial music
Where have you gone?
Is this your kindness

Immersing me in a sea of misery
In your separation
Making me mad,
Sufferring and worrying?

*aṉpōṭu civapūcai yāṟṟu mitạttotụnī*
*iṉpōtụ pāṭi irukkumitạ muntamiyēṉ*
*tuṉpōṭum paṭivārttai collumitạn tāṉumantō*
*eṉpōṭu muḷḷuruka eṉṉai varuttuṟumāl*

The place where you sit
Singing sweetly doing *civapucai,*
The place which gave me consoling words
Driving away my difficulties,
O, they make me lonely suffer
Melting my bones and heart.

I finished all the funeral rites and obsequies of my father. Now it has become my burdensome task to maintain my family, something I had not known till then. My Tamil research and study were to some extent affected by my bereavement and by the new responsibilities.

## The death of Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār

Many friends condoled with me over the loss of my father. One of them was pūṇṭi Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār. Two months later I had additional misfortune of having to mourn the loss of that patron, too. He passed away on 10.12.1893. Hearing the news, the people of Tamilnadu were shocked in their greif. Tamil scholars were stunned. He had been the head of various institutions, dedicating himself to public service. It was due to his support that many well-deserving efforts flourished. All those who were somehow connected with these were smitten as if struck by lightning. It was, at that time, a rare sight to see someone who had attained absolute excellence in English and was, at the same time, an outstanding scholar in Tamil. T. T. Kaṉakacuntaram Piḷḷai wrote in a letter which he sent me, mentioning his death, "Now there is no more anyone among those who had received the English education who would at the same time be an expert in Tamil."

I have received many assistance from Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār. It's not only because of wealth that one can attain excellence. The friendship with men of excellence can earn one great benefits. In fact, one can achieve things, by friendship like this, that one cannot get by spending sums of money. Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār's friendship was of that kind. I had become qualified to receive the esteem of many simply because he was my friend. Because of his friendship I have got acquainted with many influential persons who have done me often a good turn.

I did not write an elegy at the time Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār passed away. I remained silent, thinking, 'Is he perhaps around to take pleasure in what I write?' A few friends, though, pressed me to write some verses. I did so, to satisfy them.

*poṉṉaip peṟalām pukaḻpeṟalām pūvalayam*
*taṉṉaip peṟalām takamuyaṉṟāl yāvaiyumē*
*piṉṉaip peṟalām piṟaḻā maṉavalicēr*
*uṉṉaip peṟumāṟum uṇṭō uraiyāyē*

We can get gold
obtain fame and
Get the whole world.
Working hard, we can get
Everything.
Tell me,
Can we get one like you
of such a strong mind
Which changes never.

*Paṉiyār cilacoṟ pakarntē yuḷaṅkuḻaippōy*
*kaṉiyār iṉimai kalantē cuvaikaḷpala*
*naṉiyār tamiḻiṉ nayanteriya vallārtām*
*iṉiyā ruṉaippō liṉiyār iṉiyārē*

You who please others
With very few kind words!
Who else is there now
Who could understand
The different tastes
Mixed with the ripe sweetness
And the beauties of Tamil,
Full of good things.

*taranka vēlai yaṉaiya tāya capaiyi ṭaipukuntuniṉ*
*ṟuaṅka lanta vāṅki lēya rorumoḻip piracaṅkamaṅ*
*karaṅkanāta vaḷḷal pōla vavara varvi yantutam*
*ciṛaṅkarantu ḷakkumāṟu ceppa vallār yāvarē*

You enter an assembly of scholars
Debating like a rough ocean
To lecture in the language
Of the English with weighty arguments.
Is there anyone, like patron
Araṅkanātaṉ
Who can argue with force
And make every one wonder
Bow and shake their heads.

My mind and heart was weakened by the grief of having lost my father, by worries of having to support my family, and by the sadness at the passing of Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār. Hence my body grew weak, too. I fell ill with bilious fever. I suffered from that illness for a few weeks, but proper treatment pulled me through and somehow I survived.

# Chapter 119

# Pur̲anān̲ūr̲u published

The printing of *Pur̲anān̲ūr̲u* was finished by September 1894. It was the first among the collection *Eṭṭuttokai* edited by me. I therefore wrote out in the Introduction an account of all the eight anthologies; I explained in detail the two categories, *akam* — subjective poetry dealing with love, and *pur̲am* — objective poetry dealing with public life's incidents.

## Introduction

I codified all the manifold information the *Pur̲anān̲ūr̲u* furnished and set it down in *akaval* verse of my own. Having referred briefly to certain relevant facts concerning the commentary, I described the condition in which I had found the palmleaf manuscripts, so that everyone would know:

"In the texts without the commentary, there were letters and words either too few or too many; or transposed, transformed and changed in many various ways; moreover, in some of the poems the description giving the situation *(tiṇai)* given at the end was missing, in others the description of the theme *(tur̲ai)* was missing, in some both were nonexistent; in some were the names of author and hero altered out of recognition; one and the same poem appeared again later sometimes, with a new number; while two poems were also found written mixed together, bearing the same number. Sometimes a whole poem was missing, or the initial part, or the final part, or the middle part; in some poems there were more lines than necessary, added perchance from another stanza; and one and the same line came in redundant within the body of that poem, adding to the prevailing confusion, and so there were poems which defied our attempts at arriving at their proper meaning; and there were yet many other alterations in the handwritten palmleaf texts at our disposal. What helped us greatly in the job of removing textual errors in some poems, rectifying them and defining their shape and true meaning, or of filling in the missing words or lines in others and arrive at their correct and full form, was the patient study of the quotations, in full or in part, from this our text, found employed here and there in the commentaries on other books by old commentators."

I actually began to toy with the idea that I could launch out into historical research when I found that with the *Pur̲anān̲ūr̲u* and the data it provided one could reconstruct the ancient history of Tamilnadu, and when I felt that these data will prove very useful to scholars of many persuasions. I had with me other poems of *Eṭṭuttokai* as yet unpublished, as well as several other ancient books. The duty I had taken on myself to edit and publish them one by one has not permitted me to begin any other enterprise. I decided to provide, by publishing those texts, the source-material on which historians could base their notes and write their histories. I put down this idea in the Introduction: "Those devoted scholars who have dedicated most of their time labouring to acquire and disseminate historical facts, would find, in a close study of this volume, data concerning the biographies of many persons they write about."

## Classifying the contents of the book

With the idea of providing tools that would faciliate the research of such scholars, I prepared an alphabetic Index of names of rivers, mountains, towns, regions and countries occuring in *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. I printed separately the variations found in the names of the poets and of the heroes of the poems, and I gave a very brief version of their respective histories. There were yet other topics which formed different parts of the book: An index of items and events; an annotated glossary of themes; notes on themes, a glossary of rare words, grammatical notes. I added in the final portion of the book notes which had been prepared by Srī Veṅkaiyar and by V. Kaṉakacapai Piḷḷai.

When I saw the book completed, I was amazed: Have I done all that? I felt humbly grateful to God for His help. Friends who saw the book and its set-up, wrote to me—all of them—in praise of it. I felt only too sorry that Cēlam Irāmacuvāmi Mutaliyār and Pūṇṭi Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār were no more around to see it and to enjoy it.

## Friends Persuasion

The publication of this book has made many new friends for me. A number of them prompted me—in a completely friendly way—to publish this or that book, according to their fancy. T. T. Kaṉakacuntaram Piḷḷai wrote me that I should definitely bring out *Maṇimēkalai* and *Utayaṇaṉ Katai*. P. Kumāracuvāmi Mutaliyār, on the other hand, wished me to publish *Patiṟṟuppattu* and *Akanāṉūṟu*, and promised financial support.

I went on reading carefully all these books, and some others, too, and whenever I was tired and bored by one; I took up another for research. I wrote a few notes for one of these, and when it tired me out, I took another for reading and study. Thus I read many texts, changing from one text to another, and in this way I investigated really thoroughly all of them.

## My own house

As soon as the work on *Puṟanāṉūṟu* had been completed, I felt that a more spacious house would be more appropriate for any further research work I may take up. Father had tried to somehow purchase a house of his own. It was not possible while he was alive. The reason was, simply, lack of funds. As I was pressed for space, I thought I could not put it off any longer, borrowed some money to make up the necessary Rs. 3000, and bought a house in Sahāji Nāyakar Street. The person who sold me the house was called Cāminātaiyar. As I was buying it I said, "Well—it doesn't make any difference, does it, whether this house is mine or yours! Both names are exactly the same!"

There were three suites on the ground floor of that house, and rooms upstairs. It was a very comfortable house for our family. As it stood just opposite to the College on the bank of the Kāviri, I could arrive there on time even if I left after the first bell had been rung. I moved into my own house on an auspicious day, and continued my Tamil studies there.

## Pāṇṭitturait Tēvar

One of those who had written me on receiving the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* was Pāṇṭitturai Tēvar, the Zamindar of Pālavanattanam. He said in his letter of 14-11-1894, "I am always eager to contribute to the good cause you have taken up, in the public interest, of editing rare books, and I request that an intimation regarding a proper opportunity for it may be sent to me, Yours Pāṇṭitturai." A few weeks after I have received this letter, he arrived at Tiruviṭaimarutūr, to visit the Head of the Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai Mutt. Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar. The Mutt's Head, wrote to me to be present at his arrival. I went there at the time, met Pāṇṭitturai, and talked to him. He complimented me on the publication of *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, and asked me, "Which book are you going to print next?"

I said, "There are many texts, and I thought of editing *Maṇimēkalai*. But there are still certain points in it I am not clear about. I have an anthology known as *Puṟattiraṭṭu*. It contains a number of poems that are not currently known now. When I was preparing *Puṟanāṉūṟu* for the press, I was seeking guidance with regard to the rules that govern *puṟam* themes. As I was searching for information throwing light on the themes of that book, *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai* proved most useful. I investigated it most thoroughly. I have also an old commentary on it. Caravaṇa Perumāḷ Aiyar has published the text alone before. I am thinking of preparing a printed edition of it now, with the commentary."

## A letter in verse

As soon as Pāṇṭitturait Tēvar returned to Irāmanātupuram he sent me a letter in verse, dated 17-12-1894, along with a demand draft for five hundred rupees.

### Kaliveṇpā

1. *tiṅkaḷ puraiyun tiruvataṉac celviyoru*
*paṅkiṉamar pemmāṉ patamalarē — tuṅka*
2. *muṭikkaṇiyāt tāṅki mutuparavai vēlip*
*paṭikkaṇiyā yeṉṟum palanūl — vaṭikkum*
3. *uḷattārk korunitiyā yōṅkupukaḷ mēya*
*veḷattā luyarkuṭantai maṉṉit — tuḷakkariya*
4. *nēminā taṉmaruki nēyamaṉaiyā ḷōṭuvāḷ*
*cāminā taiya takunaṇpa — māmukavai*
5. *maṉṉiya pāṇṭitturaipal vantaṉancey tiṉṟeḻutum*
*naṉṉirupa mītām ....*
6. *kāmāri tantaviḷaṅ kātalanē rāyt tamiḻiṉ*
*nāmāri peytulakai vāḷvippōy....*
7. *payaṉciṟiya tēṉum paṉaiyaḷavk̄ koḷvar*
*nayaṉṟerivō reṉṟavuṇmai nāṭi — muyaṉṟitupō*
8. *tainnūṟu rūpā vaṉuppiṉaṉak̠ tēṟṟaruḷvāy*
*meynnū ṟurīliyoḷukum vittakā-mainnūṟi*
9. *āmālai yiṟcuvaiyuṇ ṭākkum puṟapporuḷveṇ*
*pāmālai yacciṟ pativuceyum — māmuyaṟci*

10. *ūṟikantu muṟṟa luṟuvippā ṉōṅkukavāṉ*
*āṟukanta ceṉṉiyaruḷ*

O, the great Cāmināta Aiya
Whose head is adorned with
The feet of Civaṉ, whose half
Is Umai of moon like glowing face,
Who is publishing many texts
The jewels of the ocean surounded world,
Who stays in Kuṭantai
Fertile, famous and wealth
Of those who love it dear,
Who is blessed with Tirumakaḷ
The dear consort of Tirumāl
And Carasvati, His daughter-in-law,
My dear friend!
Pāṇṭitturai of Mukavai
Pays respects to you and
Writes this letter.
You are pouring rains of Tamil
Equal to young Murukaṉ
The gift of Çivaṉ
To the prosperity of this world.
Thinking of the saying that
The intelligent ones
Consider a mole of help
Big like a palmyrah tree,
I have sent you rupees five hundred.
Accept it, please.
O, the scholar who appears
With the holy ash smeared!
The one who has the Ganges on head,
May he bless you
In your great effort
To publish complete
With difficulties, none,
*Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*
Sweet like the fresh sugarcane juice.

I wrote back, thanking him for his generous help, and also informed Ampalạvāṇa Tēcikar of this. He promptly gave me three hundred rupees. These two gifts enabled me to discharge the loan I had raised for the purchase of the house.

### *Puṟapporuḷ veṇpāmālai*

Pāṇṭitturait Tēvar's letter provided me with the incentive I needed to start the editing of *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*. I had thought before, and often, of publishing this work.

*Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai* is a grammar which gives rules of the great division of *puṟam* and provides literary *veṇpā* stanzas as illustration of these rules. It is also known simply as Veṇpāmālai. Its author is Aiyaṉāritaṉār of Cēra dynasty. I did not know at the time who was the author of the commentary on it which I had. Srī Rā. Irākavaiyaṅkār, the Makāvittuvāṉ of Irāmanātapuram, has later discovered, in a manuscript found at the Maturait Tamiḻ Caṅkam, that the author of that commentary was Mākaṟal Cāmuṇṭi Tēvanāyakar.

### Iḷampūraṇam

I had a few copies of manuscripts of *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*. I went on searching for more. T. T. Kaṉakacuntaram Piḷḷai, while giving me an ancient palmleaf script, said, "I have not the faintest idea what this manuscript is about; I just saw here and there *veṇpā* stanzas dealing with the *puṟam* stuff; you look it up." When I took it for scrutiny I saw that the leaves were just pell-mell there, put together very disorderly. I took great pains to put them in order and made a copy of it. Then, when I read it, I found out that it was a commentary on *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷatikāram*. In the part dealing with the situations of *puṟam* there were many stanzas of *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai* quoted as illustrations. The commentary seemed, at the first glance, to be different from that which had already been published in print. Apart from the thought that it must simply be some other ancient gloss, I did not try to find out who the author had been. I just read it once more.

When I began to read carefully all texts pertaining to the topics of *puṟam* and study them, I found something mentioned by the commentators on the theme called 'The Evening'. There in the commentary, it was stated that it was written by Uraiyāciriyar. From that small note I found out that the author of the commentary on *Tolkāppiyam* I had with me was a certain Iḷampūraṇar, who was also known as Uraiyāciriyar. I was truly happy because of this discovery. The study of the grammar of the *puṟam* division has yielded a great and unexpected result! I studied that commentary very carefully, and, analyzing the illustrations quoted in it, I was able to identify their source.

I prepared all the necessary tools to edit the *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*, wrote out all the pertinent parts of such a publication, and went to Madras to have it printed.

## Chapter 120

## Research in Manimēkalai

Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, the Head of the monastery at Tiruvāvaṭutuṟai, was an erudite scholar in Tamil. He also loved Sanskrit, and had a good training in music. He studies Sanskrit as an only student with a great master, Muttu Cāstirikaḷ, the *vittuvāṉ* of Kalliṭaikkuṟicci. People praised him as a distinguished patron of arts, like Karṇaṉ and Bhoja of old.

## The Tiruvāvaṭuturai library

He had one great desire — to develop the stock of books at his Mutt into a good library. Although a kind of library was in existence there, he wanted very much to enlarge it, with many printed books in Tamil, Sanskrit and English. He had a large building constructed to house the library, and today it is known as *Sarasvati Mahāl*.

Tēcikar sent me along with a few representatives of the Mutt to Madras to buy books for that library of his.

He also entrusted me with another mission. Raja Pāskara Cētupati of Irāmanātapuram had planned several times to visit Tiruvāvaṭuturai, but somehow it never came of.

The inmates of the Mutt were eager on his coming there at least once. The Cētupati was going to stay in Madras at the time. I was supposed to be there buying the books. Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar said to me, "It is up to you to meet him and persuade him somehow this time to visit us here. Let this be your chance."

The first thing I did on reaching Madras was to go and see King Pāskara Cētupati. Being genuinely and deeply attached to Tamil, he spoke to me with great kindness. When I told him of the object of my visit, he gave his consent. I informed Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar at once, conveying to him the glad news by mail. Then, with my participation, books were bought for the library worth of Rs. 5000. We bought books in many languages. Vai. Mu. Caṭakōparāmānujācāriyar was with us and helped us with the selection. I sent all the books by a goods train to Tiruvāvaṭuturai.

## Visiting Maṇi Aiyar

It was at that time that Maṇi Aiyar was appointed High Court Judge. I had never failed to call on him whenever I went to Madras and derive inspiration from such visits. On that occassion I went to give him my felicitations. As soon as he saw me he said, "The *Puranāṉūru* is excellent! What comes next?" He had received a copy of the *Puranāṉūru* previously and remitted the money for it.

"I've heard the splendid news that you've been made a Judge of the High Court. It's our good fortune, for all of us people. Now I hesitate whether I can be meeting you hereafter with the same freedom as before," I said.

"What kind of talk is this! Have I grown horns now or what? You may come here as always; talk; eat; and tell me openly if there's anything I can do for you." As he spoke, even the tone of his voice showed that no newly found dignities could change his nature and alter the direction of his behaviour which has always been full of benevolence.

I took leave of him, saw a few other friends and had a talk with them, and returned to Tiruvāvaṭuturai. Pāskara Cētupati had fixed the 31st of January 1985 as the day of his visit there. It was about that time that the great Guru Puja (Founder's Day) was to be celebrated at Tiruvāvaṭuturai. It was decided to have the library declared open before that day, and January 30 was found auspicious. Amplavāṇa Tēcikar asked what name the library should bear. I suggested *Vidya*

*Nidhi* (The Treasure-House of Learning). On January 30, the Vidya Nidhi was formally opened; many important citizens and scholars came from Kumpakōṇam, Māyūram and other places for the opening.

Next day, Pāskara Cētupati arrived at the Mutt. The reception he received was marked by unprecedented splendour. A structure had been erected called *Pāskara Vilāsam*, all of thatch. But although it was all of thatch, it was as magnificent and as well-decorated as any large state mansion. I enjoyed the conversation of the Cētupati with the Head of the Mutt since I was all the time present. After that, the Cētupati graciously departed.

## Research in Maṇimēkalai begins

*Purapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*, which was being printed at Madras, was ready for release from the press. The publication of that text had given me very little trouble. On the other hand, *Maṇimēkalai*, which I was examining at that time, proved to be exceptionally difficult. First of all, I was unable to decide to which religion the text belonged. It was a member of the College staff at Kumpakōṇam, Maḻūr Raṅkācāriyar, who informed me that it was a Buddhist work[1].

This gave rise to a new sort of fear, hitherto worrying what it was about. 'I had had occasion to study Śaivite texts, since I received my education at a Śaivite Mutt. And I acquired some knowledge about the Vaiṣṇava religion from the Vaiṣṇava scholars who used to visit there. When I took up *Cintāmaṇi* for publication I was worried and tired out because I did not really know anything about Jainism. Luckily I've got Jaina friends. Thus I learnt the necessary things about that religion which was new to me. And now I have taken up a Buddhist text! This too is a religion of which I am completely ignorant. There were Jaina friends to inform me about Jaina matters. But there is no Buddhism in India! Where shall I find some Buddhist? How shall I be able to gather information about Buddhism?' Such was the train of my thoughts.

Raṅkācāriyar then encouraged me. He said, "There's no need to be worried. There are hundreds and hundreds of books about Buddhism in English. Western scholars had made a lot of research in it, and published the results. I have myself read many. Those which I have not read I'll read now and tell you all you need to know."

I clung to him as my chief rescuer in my research connected with *Maṇimēkalai*.

## Study of Buddhism

From that day on, I plunged into the study of Buddhism on my own, too. I was on the look-out for every bit of information about Buddhism that I could find in Tamil writings, and I collected them all. In the commentary on *Nīlakēci*, wherever the Buddhist religion is mentioned to be refuted, one finds accounts of Buddha's life and Buddhist doctrines. In the commentary on the grammar

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[1] The details about this, one can see in *Maṇimēkalaiyum Mummaṇiyum*, one of my essays in Niṉaivu Mañcari.

*Vīracōḻiyam* composed by a Tamil scholar called Puttamittirar there are quoted, as illustrations, many poems about the Lord Buddha. I copied them all down and studied them. I also noted down and studied many Buddhist tenets mentioned, for the purpose of being condemned, by Ñāṉappirakācar in his commentary on *Civañāṉacittiyār* under the section Heretical Beliefs. Apart from these I could not obtain any work on Buddhism either in Tamil or in Sanskrit. Raṅkācāriyar told me that the majority of Buddhist religious texts were all in the Pali language.

He read out to me the books written in English by Monier Williams, Max Mueller, Oldenberg, Rhys Davis and others.

I actually ordered a few books to be bought. The more I heard about the life of the Lord Buddha, the more absorbed I became in His noble personality.

Again and again I came back to reading the *Maṇimēkalai*. Many passages that puzzled and confused me became cleared little by little. The tenets and views of Buddhism appeared clad in words of exquisite simplicity. I read them with enormous pleasure. Raṅkācāriyar listened and could not contain his enthusiasm. "Oh! Ah! How beautiful! How apt are the words that convey the same ideas translated into Tamil!" he would say again and again in rapt attention and high praise. He asked me to read out the passages praising the Buddha many times, and would be beside himself with joy. "I have read a great lot in English; but I have seen passages of such sweetness nowhere else", he declared.

## Lovely passages

*Maṇimēkalai* sets out briefly the Four Noble Truths proclaimed by the Buddhists — the Truth of Suffering, of the Origin of Suffering, of the Cessation of Suffering, and of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering:

*piṟantō ruṟuvatu perukiya tuṉpam*
*piṟavā ruṟuvatu perumpē riṉpam*
*paṟṟiṉ varuvatu muṉṉatu piṉṉa*
*taṟṟō ruṟuva taṟika*

Those who are born have misery as heritage;
Those who evade birth experience bliss;
Clinging is the root of suffering;
Detachment is joy — know this!

Numerous are the passages praising Lord Buddha. Whenever I read these lines revealing so well the greatness of that man who lived persevering in Dharma rooted in Compassion, I was genuinely thrilled and moved.

The author of *Maṇimēkalai* sings about Him in such terms as 'The One who lived not for Hmself but dedicated His life to others; the Hero who conquered cupid — *Maṉmataṉ*; the One who subdued the grim Enemy — Evil Deeds; the Great One who toiled for all others; the Ancient One who renounced Paradise.'

I used to quote verses I had come across in other Tamil works as occasion arose. One of these is a lament of those who were near the Lord Buddha on his entering the Parinirvāṇa. It is quoted as an illustration by the commentator on *Vīracōḻiyam:*

*maruḷaṟutta perumpōti mātavaraik kaṇṭilamāl*
*eṉcey kēmyām*
*aruḷirunta tirumoḻiyā laṟavaḻakkiṅ kēṭṭilamāl*
*eṉcey kēmyām*
*poruḷaṟiyu maruntavattup puravalaraik kaṇṭilamāl*
*eṉcey kēmyām*

Since we can never more see before us the Saint
who destroyed Darkness with Great Enlightenment
what shall we do, what shall we do?

Since we can never more hear the Dharma
expounded by Him with Compassion in saintty words
what shall we do, what shall we do?

Since we shall never more see the Prince
whose penance led him straight to the Truth
what shall we do, what shall we do?

When I read this poem I could not read on and my tongue faltered. Raṅkācāriyar, too, was fully overcome by its pathos, and forgot his self in a feeling of tender sympathy.

Thus I went on with my research in *Maṇimēkalai,* fully absorbed in the Buddha's biography and exploring with pleasure the tenets of the Buddhist faith.

### The help rendered by Sumaṅgaḷar

The *kāvya* describes Maṇimēkalai as visiting Sri Lanka. We come across a few Sri Lankan place-names in that connection. I wrote to my friend in Colombo, Po. Kumāracāmi Mutaliyār, to inquire and identify those place-names for me, and asked him to recommend to me someone who could help me to clarify my doubts connected with matters related to the Buddhist religion. Mutaliyār referred me to a Buddhist elder called Sumaṅgaḷar, who was both Principal and Professor of Buddhism at the Vidyodaya College there. He sent me his replies to many questions I had asked about the scriptures and doctrines of Buddhism. It was through him that I learned that the term Camaṉoḷi in the verse

*Ilaṅkā tīvattuc camaṉoḷi yeṉṉum*
*cilampu....*

The hillock
known as Camaṉoḷi on the Island of Lanka

referred to as Camantam, too, was the rock popularly known as Adam's Peak. I also learned that it contained the footprints of the Lord Buddha.

### Passages which captivated the mind

Apart from reading and studying *Maṇimēkalai* with Raṅkācāriyar I studied the text on my own, too. In particular, I thought frequently and deeply about the passage which negates the human body.

*Viṉaiyiṉ vantatu viṉaikkuviḷai vāyatu*
*puṉaivaṉa nīṅkiṟ pulālpuṟat tiṭuvatu*
*mūppuviḷi yuṭaiyatu tīppiṇi yirukkai*
*paṟṟiṉ paṟṟiṭaṅ kuṟṟak koḷkalam*
*puṟṟaṭaṅ karaviṟ ceṟṟac cēkkai*
*avalak kavalai kaiyā ṟaḻuṅkal*
*tavalā vuḷḷan taṉpā luṭaiyatu*
*makkaḷ yākkai.*

The human body
Is the result of *karma*
And also the cause for *karma*,
Has age and death.
It is the abode of
Severe diseases and affection,
A vessel holding all evil actions,
Angry like a snake in an anthill,
Having a mind never separated, always
Worried and sufferring, helpless.

I was moved by the lines which prescribed the *aṉṉatānam*, the gift of food, of basic subsistance:

*maṇṭiṇi ñālattu vāḻvōrkk kellām*
*uṇṭi koṭuttō ruyirkoṭut tōrē*

Those who give food to all that lives
In this solid, earthly world — they give the very gift of life."

Āputtiraṉ speaks in irony and contempt about paradise, a place which does not know the *dharma* and *dāna*, the merit of compassionate giving, of true generosity:

*aṟañcey mākkaḷ puṟaṅkāt tōmpuṉar*
*naṟṟavañ ceyvōr paṟṟaṟa muyalvōr*
*yāvaru millāt tēvarnaṉ ṉāṭṭuk*
*kiṟaiva ṉākiya voruperu vēntē*

O! king unique and great
Of the beautiful world of Tēvars
Where there is none
Who does dharma,
Who protects and helps,
Who does good tapas,
And who tries to sever
Attachments.

The depth of the meaning of such words which speak in *irony* of Indra and his Heaven has truly filled me with admiration and delight, the more I contemplated them.

Raṅkācāriyar remained in Kumpakōṇam for a year and a half. I used to go to him without fail and take down every point he mentioned about Buddhism. Subsequently, he was transferred to Madras. On the verge of his leaving for Madras he told me, "Please publsih this book as soon as you can; it is as precious as the choicest rubies."

"By going to Madras, sir, you have not done away with the *Maṇimēkalai*", I said. "I shall certainly come there and continue to trouble you."

"If that is so I shall deem myself most fortunate", he answered, revealing thus his pleasure. *Maṇimēkalai* has entered his heart by means of its precious content and the sweetness of its style.

# Chapter 121

## Maṇimēkalai goes to press

One of the Westerners who had become my friends was the Reverend G. U. Pope. He had spent many years in Tamilnadu. He wrote in Tamil a small grammar called *Ciṟṟilakkaṇam* for children. It has become popular in Tamilnadu as 'Pope Aiyar Ilakkaṇam'. He has translated and published in English *Tiruvācakam* and *Nālaṭiyār*. At this time he was Professor of Tamil at Oxford University.

Once while I was talking to Pūṇṭi Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār, one of us mentioned Pope's name. Mutaliyār then said, "The edition of *Nālaṭiyār* he has prepared for print is excellent. He had laboured hard and gathered a lot of data contained in his Notes. He has also mentioned with great appreciation your edition of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*." And he brought me his copy of Peop's book.

### The friendship of Dr. Pope

Later, as soon as *Puṟanāṉūṟu* was published, I sent Dr. Pope a copy. This was at the time when Araṅkanāta Mutaliyār was no more. For a few months I had no letter from Pope. I did not know whether my book had reached him or not. Then in May I received his acknowledgment. It was written in English:

Indian Institute,
Oxford,
April 26, 1895

Dear Sir,

... I should have written earlier to thank you for your gift of your learned and valuable edition of the Pura Nanooru.

I have your excellent edition of the Jivaga Cintamani, which I have used continually and referred to in my Naaladiyaar (p. XLI Intro.).

Have you published anything else? I am hoping to write a paper for the Royal Asiatic Society about your editions.

Meanwhile is it not possible to make Pura Nanooru more intelligible and interesting? I frnakly acknowledge that, although I thought I know Tamil, I cannot follow most of these pieces. Can you? If so let us have summaries, plain and easy notes and explanations. Have pity on us who are not Pandits.

The Cintamani, on the whole, is easy.

Again, in the interest of our dear and honoured Tamil, I want a critical edition of the Tolkapyam. [The examples, commentaries should be made accessible! You and I can use it, but is it really read, as it might be?

And again,] throwing aside legends (which are interesting, but utterly unhistoric) can any history of the Three Sangams, compiled from the genuine, authentic originals of Tamil, be edited?

[Much of Kali Togai is very fine, and a little of Silappadikaaram — see my Naaladi pp.39,260,257.

I should like to have such gems from other poems.

I want to add to my bibliographical Survey all real old Tamil. Help me if you can.

Perhaps you will smile at all this, a foreigner's ignorance. At least I want to help in restoring Tamil to its place as one of the great mother languages of the world.

Anything you send me will be used and valued.]

Tell me at any rate how to estimate rightly and use the Pura Nanooru.

[its first poem by Perundevanaar is fine, but more like Manikkavasagar. Is it genuine?

Excuse all this and believe me

Yours truly,
G. U. Pope.

I could recognize, from this very first letter of his, the measure of love he bore for Tamil. As one whose ambition was to publish Tamil classics in the best manner and most attractive form possible I considered all that he had written most welcome.

I sent him next a copy of *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*. As soon as he received it he wrote me the following letter:

Balliol College,
Oxford,
October 21, 1895

[Dear Mr. Saminathaiyar,]

Thank you much for your Purapporul Venba Maalai which is in our Tamil library, which I am striving to make complete.

I too plan much, but you are young, and I am old!
*Orupoḻutum vāḻva taṟiyār karutupa*
*kōṭiyu malla pala*
"Who know not if their happy lives shall last the day,
In fancies infinite beguile the hours away!"

I have been very ill, but hope to do a little more yet. Your work is accurate and thorough. But I want to see old Tamil more accessible to new Tamil men. Bridge it over. [ Let us have all made plain.

I cannot write more than to thank you for your labours and to assure you of my gratitude.

Yours very sincerely,
G. U. Pope.]

In this letter he had written the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* quotation in Tamil itself. His writing showed how feeble he was, and his words indicated the poor state of his health. I tried to imagine the frame of mind in which he had chosen to quote that wonderful *Tirukkuṟaḷ* beginning with "Who know not...." The verse revealed the fear hidden in his heart of not knowing what to do in case death were to overtake him in the middle of his efforts to realize a numer of his cherished plans. I prayed that he may live many more years.

Fortunately, the state of his health improved. It must have been his love of Tamil that triumphed over the feebleness of age and filled him with renewed vigour. He wrote to me again in the beginning of 1896.

Balliol College,
Oxford,
January 3, 1896

[Dear Sir,]

I have too long put off writing to you, but severe illness and incessant work must be my excuse. Pardon it, I beg.

I am reading together with immense pleasure and real ease your admirable edition of Pura Nanooru and Purapporul Venba Maalai which illustrate one another beautifully. I am writing a paper on them, of Pari, his daughters, Kapilar, Poththiyaar and others. I want to get more traditions. Charming verses, 115 to 120.

[Can you send me the books in enclosed list marked (?)? Those marked (!) I have thoroughly mastered with your help.

What about Akananooru? I want a good, complete copy of Silappadikaaram. Kali Togai is fine! A complete history of Madura Sangam is needed.]

Did you get my Naaladiyaar from Oxford? [Accept it with my sincere respect.

I will remit payment at once for anything you are so kind as to send, which you think may help me to make my survey of the most ancient Tamil less incomplete. An edition of Tolkappiam with indexes and apparatus is much needed. C. F. Damodaram Pillai's is bar. Choodaamani wants a thorough edition, a twin brother of Cintamani.]

I wish you and yours God's best gifts for 1896.

[Your sincere friends,
G. U. Pope]

I did receive the copy of *Nālaṭiyār* he had sent me. I understood from this letter how devoted and zealous he was as a student of Tamil literature which he studied in great depth. And I very much approved of his idea that one should grasp clearly whatever one studied, and then express it to others so that they would understand with equal clarity.

I compared the love Pope of Oxford bore to Tamil with the love of Tamil as expressed by Julien Vinson in Paris. Each was perfect in its own way. Both these men threw themselves into their work with unceasing efforts and genuine affection. I could not help thinking, with sadness, of the laziness of our fellow countrymen who have none of these virtues and let their life time run out in waste.

The Reverend Pope wrote me many letters again and again. He published in an English translation many precious poems which he had selected from *Puṟanāṉūṟu* and *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*. He used to send a copy of one of these translations to me along with the New Year greetings at the beginning of each year.

I derived inspiration from the service to Tamil rendered with true love by such genuine hard-working friends. I continued my research in *Maṇimēkalai*.

## Letters of Cuntaram Piḷḷai

In the beginning of 1896, I was informed by Professor P. Cuntaram Piḷḷai of Trivandrum that he was searching for a person fit to teach Tamil in his College. If I would accept the job my initial salary would be sixty-five rupees, but gradually it would be increased. He wrote me about it, but I did not accept the offer. Later they appointed someone who knew English.

A few parts of the drama *Maṉōṉmaṇīyam* which Cuntaram Piḷḷai had composed were at the time prescribed as study text for College classes. While I was teaching this text, I praised it wherever praise was deserved, and pointed out a few mistakes as well, making the students aware of them. Someone had of course informed Cuntaram Piḷḷai of this, and he wrote me demanding that I tell him about his errors. I collected the few which I have found, sent the list to him, he accepted my acceptable corrections and expressed his gratitude to me. Since then we had a lively correspondence, his letters being very frequent and friendly.

## Kâtai and pāṭṭu

I was making suitable arrangements in order to give away the *Maṇimēkalai* to the press as soon as possible. The copy obtained in Mitilaippaṭṭi was of tremendous help. In other copies, the various parts of the epic were designated as *kātai* 'chapters'. In the Mitilaipaṭṭi copy, they were designated as *pāṭṭu* 'cantos'. In the very beginning, the Preface — patikam was named *katai poti pāṭṭu* — The Canto summarizing the Story'; next, the 'Chapter annoumcing the Festival' — Viḻāvaṟai Kātai was named rather *Viḻāvaṟainta Pāṭṭu*. The chapter announcing the Festival;

and so on — the titles of the other portions were designated differently like this. From these titles it was possible to deduce that one meaning of the term *kātai* indeed was — *pāṭṭu* 'canto'. There were other indications to support this conclusions.

## The bare text of Maṇimēkalai

Vittuvāṉ Caṇmukam Piḷḷai of Tirumayilai had printed the bare text of *Maṇimēkalai* in 1891. He reproduced the readings as they were found in palmleaf manuscripts, without an assessment of their meaning. It was difficult to really understand the poem's meaning with the help of that publication. At the very time that it was being printed, Ti. Ta. Kaṉakacuntaram Piḷḷai wrote to me about it on 29.3.1891, complaining about it, for he had been shown the formes. He wrote "They showed me three printed formes. They were worse than what I had seen before. The printing is as they are found in the palmleaves. Perhaps palm leaves are better than theirs. What is available in the palmleaves as *cokkaliṅkam*, though one may read it as *kaliṅkam*, there may be others who would read it as *cokkaliṅkam* befitting the context. After these people print it as *cērakkaliṅkam*, one who has not read the palmleaves, is going to read it only as *cērakkaliṅkam*. If the expressions *eṭṭikkumaraṉiruntōṉṟaṉṉai* and *āṟari yantaṉar* are printed as *eṭṭirumāṉiruntōṉ* and *āṟṟi yantaṉar*, you can imagine for yourself the results of such printing." (29.3.1891). Afterwards, when the book was published and I saw it, I realized that there was enough scope for further research.

## Detailed notes

I thought that there was nothing wrong in bringing out a *Maṇimēkalai* edition of my own, as the fruit of my own research, with copious notes of various kind, seven years after that publication had appeared. Many of my friends urged me to write and publish a full-fledged commentary on *Maṇimēkalai*. And the letter written to me by M. Pope that our aim should be to make ancient Tamil classics intelligible, acted as a further incentive. Without attempting a word-for-word paraphrase, I began writing notes that would be detailed and copious, and soon came almost to the end of my work. In the chapter *Camayak kaṇakkartan tiṟamkēṭṭa kātai* that deals with the discussions of theologians are explained the doctrines of religions other than Buddhism. And in the chapter *Tavattiṟam pūṇṭu tarumaṅkēṭṭa kātai* that describes the heroine's listening to the Dharma and taking holy orders, the Noble Eightfold Path and other Buddhist matters, particularly of logic, are dealt with. It seemed to me rather difficult to write out detailed notes on these two passages. So I approached Mahāmahopādhyāya Raṅkācāriyar of Kuṟicci who was a leading authority on Sanskrit logic and similar matters, and asked his advice. He explained to me clearly all the points in the former chapter. But he cannot explain the matters contained in the latter chapter; he said, "Ancient books dealing with this subject are no longer extant. This is a very ancient mode of logic."

When a few doubts arose connected with usages in Sanskrit, I approached for help the Sanskrit pandit of Kumpakōṇam College, Perukavāḻntāṉ Mahāmahopādhyāya Raṅkācāriyar, and Tirumalai Īccampāṭi Catāvatāṉam Śrīnivāsācāriyar, and they have gladly explained the problems to me.

So I wrote a sort of Detailed Notes on all other parts, and when it came to the chapter dealing with logic I approached specialists of various sorts and adopted the readings that appeared more plausible than others, trying as far as I was able to follow their suggestions. The other variants I set down wherever necessary in the footnotes.

### My joy

When I got together everything according to my wish I took the *Maṇimēkalai* and went to Madras, where I gave it to the press (V. N. Jubilee Printing Works) on 5-6-1896. The book began to be printed, with the foot-notes, just as I had written them down, at the bottom of each page. God only knows how tremendously pleased I was when I saw the first forme and gave the order to strike off! 'Shall I ever get this book printed?' I used to worry like this, but now I saw it taking concrete shape and I felt refreshed and invigorated in mind and body.

# Chapter 122

## I receive a title

While *Maṇimēkalai* was in the press, I wrote a synopsis of the story to be included in it as a biography of Maṇimēkalai. Here and there in my notes I explained many points concerning Buddhism which were not currently known in this country. Nevertheless I thought that a separate article about the tenets of that religion, appended as a part of that book, would be of great use to the readers. I have jotted down everything Maḷūr Raṅkācāriyar had explained to me about *Maṇimēkalai* when I consulted him. I also took down in Tamil, with the help of some friends, relevant passages from books in English about Buddhism.

### The Three Jewels

The Buddha, the Buddha Dharma, and the Buddhist Sangha are traditionally spoken of as The Three Jewels by the Buddhists. With my notes as guide I began to write an account of The Three Treasures. What I wrote I read from time to time out to Raṅkācāriyar during his stay in Kumpakōṇam, and discussed with him. When he was transferred to Madras, I would let him read all I had written whenever I visited Madras. Reading the quotations I have given in it in various places from Tamil poetry afforded him the keenest pleasure.

### The arrival of Pāṇṭit Turait Tēvar

In November of 1896, Pāṇṭit Turai Tēvar, the Zamindar of Pālavanattam, arrived in Kumpakōṇam in order to see the famous saint Mauna Svāmī. I received him properly, entertained and honoured him and in a gathering of prominent citizens I made him speak. He stayed in Kumpakōṇam two or three days; once he came to my house. At that occasion, many friends were invited to honour him, and I organized a house-concert with the participation of well-known musicians like Cīṉuvaiyaṅkār, Tirukkōṭikā Kiruṣṇaiyar who came with him and others. When Pāṇṭit Turait Tēvar saw all the rare palmleaf manuscripts that I had with me, he was truly amazed. When he learned that *Maṇimēkalai* was being sent to press, he promised to contribute to the expense.

I showed him the anthology *Puṟattiraṭṭu* which I had then with me, and explained to him that it contained hundreds of stanzas gathered from various ancient texts. He said, "I am myself thinking of publishing in book form a collection of moral maxims which I have gathered from many sources. It would be useful for me if I could have a look at it once." After a few months, when he came to Kumpakōṇam for the Makāmakam festival, he got the manuscript from me.

## Supreme reward

The Makāmakam festival came in February 1897. The crowds gathered in Kumpakōṇam were enormous. The Head of Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt, Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar, was staying with his retinue in the Mutt's own building in Pēṭṭai street in Kumpakōṇam. Important citizens, great men, rich patrons, scholars and poets came from many regions to participate.

Learned discussions and entertainments in the presence of Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar were a daily feature there. Arrangements were made one day to offer highest honours to the foremost scholars of the time. Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar had ordered six special seats, and in five out of the six he seated five Sanskrit scholars of great renown. When they took their seats of honour, he pointed to the sixth seat and said to me, "Please take that seat." I was startled. Where was I, compared to these elderly scholars who had spent a lifetime in their thorough mastery of Śāstras and scriptures, and had even shed a lustre on their branches of learning! Seeing me standing there in doubt Tēcikar said, "Why do you hesitate? You may take your seat!" "I don't deserve a place equal to theirs," I said. Tecikar spoke to me in a tone of infinite tenderness, and made me do as he wished saying, "The whole world knows you deserve this reward. It is likely that we may come across great scholar like these if we search through the land. To find someone like you — that is really difficult." I went and sat meekly in the same row as those illustrious men. I was given the high award of a double shawl. I praised the Lord's Grace, and felt that the honour was due to the drudgery and toil put in while editing the *Maṇimēkalai*.

## Paṉṉūṟṟiraṭṭu

That year's Makāmakam was attended by Pāṇṭit Turait Tēvar and his friend, a well-known Tamil scholar, Vīra. Le. Ciṉṉaya Ceṭṭiyār. With great pleasure I took part in their conversations. It was then that I handed over my copy of Puṟattiraṭṭu to Pāṇṭit TuraitTēvar. He had published his anthology of many gnomic stanzas under the title *Paṉṉūṟṟiraṭṭu* 'The Collection from Many Books'. I learned that the *Puṟattiraṭṭu* was very helpful for that.

## My son's wedding

In June 1897, the marriage took place of my son Cirañcīvi Kaliyāṇacuntaram with Kamalāmpāḷ, the daughter of Śrī Cakkarapāṇi Aiyar of Nākapaṭṭiṉam. Subsequently, the ceremony of "the bride entering the house" followed in Kumpakōṇam. Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar and other well-wishers were then of great help. My son's wedding day fell into one with the day of the Diamond Jubilee of Empress Victoria. Celebrations were in full swing in many towns. The Munsif of the Karur District, Śrī A. Cāmpamūrti Cāstirikaḷ demanded from me that I compose a few verses in honour of the Empress to be used in the festivities; I complied with his wish.

## Maṇimēkalai comes out

The text of *Maṇimēkalai* with the gloss and other apparatus came out in July of 1898. Everything was in it — the Introduction, the life of the Buddha, accounts of the Buddha Dharma and Buddhist Sangha, as well as the synopsis of the story.

When the book was published, I received innumerable laudatory mesages. In my notes, I had quoted illustrations from 59 Tamil authorities and from 29 texts in Sanskrit. Besides these, I had given in various places plenty of useful data from Tamil and Sanskrit commentators. Every little bit of knowledge I had gathered concerning the authors and commentators I had quoted from was included in a separate section termed "Items referred to in the Glossary". In it were a few stanzas from *Kuṇṭalakēci*, too, which I took from *Puṟattiraṭṭu*. This section was a sort of dictionary in the manner of an English encylopaedia. "If you write similar accounts with other books too, all these could be finally collected and published as a separate volume", said my friends. I had myself always wished for such a comprehensive work of reference in Tamil. My friends only made my desire keener by what they said.

*Maṇimēkalai* was the first literary work for which I provided a commentary. Many people praised it for the simplicity of its diction and style. Many others liked it as it provided information on many points. Vi. Kō. Cūriyanārāyaṇa Cāstiriyār, the Professor of Tamil at The Christian College, wrote to me: "I certainly do not want to flatter this edition of *Maṇimēkalai* in any way. It is really quite outstanding. My heart is filled with excessive joy whenever I think of the character which knows how to absolutely rightly frustrate those who would like to have this and not to have that, and proceeds with its own best decisions and wishes. We and the ours enter now as ever a festive and joyful dance of celebration in praise of our generous Cāminātaṉ. May our Lord the spotless Mīṉāṭcicuntara enjoying the delight of the fresh nectar of Tamil grant you the grace of many long days of your life so that, like the Sun, you may explain the meaning of many books, like a noble king of our nourishing Tamil, as if our noble Nacciṉārkkiṉiyār of my place would still stand in the midst of us."

## I have got a title

Compliments concerning the publication of *Maṇimēkalai* came pouring to me daily, both by letters and by word of mouth. An article appeared in the issue of a periodical called *Vivēka Tivākaraṉ*, dated 7th March 1899, under the title “Master Propagator of Buddhist Sacred Texts”, by a friendly writer who used the pen-name ‘Ānantaṉ’. I began to read it eagerly, hoping to find in it something about a great Buddhist teacher—judging from the title. But it was about me!

“All of us of whatever persuasion, are bound to praise highly Uttamatāṉapuram Cāminātaiyar, Tamil pandit of the College at Kumpakōṇam, who has won undying reputation first by devoting all his time to the study of the *Caṅkam* classics, and by spreading throughout the whole of Tamilnadu the very rare, ancient and famous works of Buddhist religion, *Cintāmaṇi*, *Cilappatikāram*, *Maṇimēkalai*, etc. published in print by him. Śrī Aiyar, in order to secure the copies of these Buddhist works, has had to go from region to region, from district to district, from town to town, from village to village, from street to street from house to house, and there was no measure to the time and efforts he had spent and the sufferings he had to endure while engaged in the scrutinizing of the work thus obtained, in writing out the commentaries on them, in studying the lives of the Buddhist saints and the traditions and doctrines of Buddhist religion. His mind has been steeped in the study of Buddhism at all hours. He had nothing but Buddhism on his mind, whether he walked or talked, whether he went through his own routine of daily prayer or Śaivite worship, and even while he slept. If it were not so, he could never have had produced such jewels of scholarship. The truth of this statement can be revealed in the Introductions to his printed works. In these he has stated, quoting many European authorities, that Lord Buddha did not really contradict the doctrines of Brahmins. He has tried to show that Saint Tiruñaṉa Campantamūrtti Svamikaḷ and others refuted Buddha only because of the vagueness of his views concerning personal God and the human soul, not for any other reason.

At the end of this Buddhist book, he has printed several hymns of the *Tēvāram*. The very merit he has accumulated in previous births has apparently enabled Śrī Aiyar such success in research. Why? Because all scriptures agree that a man is reborn in the exact form which was on his mind the moment he departs from this life; for verification of this truth we may refer to that chapter *Pāttiramarapu kūṟiya Kātai* of *Maṇimēkalai* which proclaims, “He was born out of a cow because of his thought to support tender lives’, and to the special note Parimēlaḻakar had written on *Tirukkuṟaḷ* 358. It would be difficult to find someone else in our times who would be a greater expert on books on Buddhist doctrines than he is. Hence we hope that Buddhists, settled in many countries of the world, will show their gratitude to him and cherish and honour him by bestowing on him some title of distinction in accordance with their faith. If not, they will certainly have killed the great good he has done them. Śrī Aiyar will most probably shine in his next incarnation as a Buddhist guru. It is certain that the Lord Buddha of the Buddhists will vouchsafe such destiny to Śrī Aiyar.”

When I read this review, written by a well-meaning friend, I only laughed. His mock-praise did not upset me. Do I have to point out how much of a lover of Tamil literature this Ānantaṉ was if he could class *Cintāmaṇi* and other works with *Buddhist* literature?

My friends joined me in my laughter. That title, "Master Propagator of Buddhist Sacred Texts" that came unexpectedly to me, I kept in my box as something to be proud of. I got an opportunity to let it out only now. Formerly, while I was engaged in editing the *Cintāmaṇi*,. a Jain lady was good enough to call me, affectionately, a "soul fit for grace". That had not made me a Jain. Nor did I become a Buddhist guru because of what this man had now said about me.

I turned my attention next to works like *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, *Patiṟṟuppattu*, *Akanāṉūṟu* and *Peruṅkatai*.

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